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A SHORT
ACCOUNT
OF THE
CONTROVERSY
BETWEEN *Church of*
The Church of ENGLAND, K
AND
The DISSENTERS.

IN WHICH,
The Pleas for SEPARATION from the
CHURCH of *England* are Prov'd to be
Insufficient, from the Writings of the most
Eminent Men among the DISSENTERS
themselves : And their *Separation* con-
demn'd by all the *Reformed Churches* be-
yond Seas.

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TO THE READER.

THere are some ('tis like) who may think it an Useless and Impertinent Piece of Work, to write a Book on this Subject, that has been lately so ingeniously handled by such Eminent and Learned Men as the Bishop of Worcester, Dr. Comber, Dr. Maurice, &c. But though no Man that I know will pretend to write better than they have done, yet there are several things in this Book that have not been taken Notice of by any who have yet written on this Subject. And since Mens Notions and Apprehensions are so different, 'tis like some may be mov'd with one Argument, some

To the Reader.

with another ; according as it suits their several Judgments and Capacities. But besides, there are several Persons who desire to be satisfied concerning the Matters in Controversie between the Church of England, and the Dissenters ; but are unwilling to bestow the Time or Pains to read over all the Books at large that have been written on this Subject : For the Satisfaction (chiefly) of these sort of Men, I have here, as briefly as I cou'd, set down the true state of the Controversie between us, and the Arguments used on both Sides, by the most Eminent Men that have written on this Subject. From all which it does appear, that the Church of England is as true a Part of the Catholick Church as any this day in the World ; and that all the Objections which the Dissenters make to her, do arise from Ignorance and Mistaken Notions ; That all the Reform'd Churches beyond Seas, do own her as a true Reform'd Church,

To the Reader.

Church, and do highly Condemn all those who Separate from her, and declare them to be guilty of downright Schism. And that the Dissenters in Condemning the Church of England, do Condemn all the Reform'd Churches, as well as this Church. I cou'd have brought many more Authorities for the Proof of all this Matter, but I purposely omit them, because these which I have brought are sufficient, and are such as the Dissenters never did, nor I think never will Pretend to Answer. Another Reason why I omit them is, in hopes that the smallness of the Book may Invite some to the Reading of it, that 'tis like might be discourag'd at a larger Volume.



A SHORT
ACCOUNT
 OF THE
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 BETWEEN
 The Church of *ENGLAND*,
 AND
 The *DISSENTERS*.

WHEN God Almighty first created Man, he gave him no other Law to walk by, but that of Nature or Reason; under which alone he liv'd for the first 2000 Years: But at last, this Law of Reason being greatly lett and blinded by Evil Customs, it became necessary to give Men more Positive Laws and Rules to walk by: Therefore God Almighty commanded *Moses* to write a Law for his People, which

we call the *Mosaical Law*, and sometimes the *Moral Law*, and is contained in the Old Testament: And this Law God Almighty reveal'd to Men by the Mediation of an Angel; but it being for a great part Typical, and Ceremonial, and therefore not so plain and easie to be understood, as that of the New Testament; God did then often appear to his People himself, and teach them more immediately what he would have them do, what not.

And under this Law of the Old Testament, superadded to the Law of Reason or Nature, (which is the same in reasonable Creatures) Men liv'd till God was pleas'd to reveal his Will to us, after a more full and excellent manner by the Mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, in the New Testament: And this Law of the New Testament, is that under which we live at this Day, a great part of the Old being hereby abolish'd. See *Galat. 4.*

And as this Law of the New Testament was reveal'd to us after a more excellent Manner than that of the Old; so the Matter of it is most extraordinary, containing nothing in it superfluous, nor wanting any thing necessary to the directing all Men to Heaven on very easie terms. It is so adapted
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and fitted to all Conditions of Men, that the very meanest Capacities may easily understand every thing contain'd in it, which is necessary to their Salvation. And this Evangelical Law, Christ and his Apostles have left as a Rule for all succeeding Ages to walk by.

But notwithstanding that our Saviour and his Apostles had left the World such Plain and Positive Rules to walk by, that none that were not wilfully so cou'd be mistaken in them; yet such has been the unhappiness of the Christian Church, that it never wanted some within it of such restless and peevish Spirits, as to disturb its Peace and Quiet, by making Divisions and Schisms in it; which St. Paul foresaw, when he told the Elders, *Acts 20. 30. Also of your selves shall Men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw Disciples after them.* But though there have been always some Divisions in the Church ever since the first Planting of it; yet for the first Three or Four Hundred Years, they were much fewer than what have been since, and those that were, were much more discountenanc'd and oppos'd by the generality of Christians, than they were afterwards.

In the Church of *Africa*, a little before St. *Augustine's* Days, there arose the Schism of the *Donatists*; who separated upon the

the account that the Bishopricks were too Large, and the Power of the Bishops too Great. And because the Ministers were not so Able and Holy Men as they should be, and because they dislik'd the Liturgies and Publick Prayers of the Church, and for such-like Reasons. And a little before in the Third Century, began the *Novatian* Schism at *Rome*; for that *Novatus* thinking the Bishopricks too Large, would needs be chosen Bishop in the same City where *Cornelius* was chosen before: But both these Schisms were condemned, This by the Council of *Carth.* and the Council of *Constantinople*, and by *St. Cyprian*, Ep. 52. N. 4, &c. And That of the *Donatists* by all the Catholick Bishops at the Conference at *Carth.* See *Conference of the Third Day*, Chap. 4. And by *St. Augustine* in his Books against *Permenian*, *Petilian*, and the other *Donatist* Bishops.

But not long after, about the Fifth and Sixth Century, the Errors, and Corruptions in the Church, began to Increase more abundantly, and appear more bare-fac'd and openly, than formerly they had done; for that as the *Roman* Empire began to decline, there follow'd a general decay of Learning, and gross Ignorance had over-spread the Earth; insomuch, that many of the Priests themselves cou'd

cou'd not read *Latin*; and then it was no difficult Matter to bring in what Heresies and Schisms Men wou'd. And this was the time that most of the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, were introduced, as Dr. *Comber* observes, in his *Advice to the Roman Catholicks of England*.

Under this Cloud of Ignorance and Darkness, did the Church lie hid for many Hundreds of Years; till about the Year 1510. when it pleased God to open the Eyes of some of his People, and to let them see those great Abuses with which the World had been so long abus'd, and under the Burden of which, the Church had groan'd for so many Hundred Years. And though here in *England*, there has been for many Years before the Reformation, a strong Disposition that way, as may appear by the several Acts of Parliament made since the Conquest, to lessen and take away the Pope's Power and Authority, as well in Ecclesiastical as Civil Matters within these Kingdoms. See *Coke's 5th Rep. De jure Regis Ecclesiastico*. Yet the Pope had always so great an Interest at Court, and the Clergy in the Nation, having got most of the Lands into their own Hands, that this glorious Design cou'd never be accomplish'd, till it pleased God to make an
open

open breach between King *H. 8.* and the Pope; upon which, he totally rejected the Pope's Supremacy, and assum'd to himself the stile of Supream Head of the Church in these Nations, and Defender of the Faith. And thus the Pope being quite forsaken, 'twas likely Popery wou'd not live long, having lost its Infalible Head. And so indeed it prov'd; For in King *Edw. 6.* days, Popery was quite turn'd out of Doors, by the general consent of the whole Nation; whose Example many of the Churches beyond Seas follow'd. And thus the general Reformation was happily begun; and the Christian Church being stript of all its antick Disguises, began to appear again, and shine forth in its natural Form and Brightness.

But because 'twas impossible to bring the People clearly off, from what they and their Ancestors had been bred up in, and accustomed to for so many Ages; or to make them capable of distinguishing on a sudden, between things hurtful in Religion, and things Indifferent; therefore 'twas thought convenient, that no Alterations shou'd be made in things Indifferent, nor any Scruples rais'd about them; which wou'd at that time have hinder'd much the Reformation; since many were with difficulty enough brought

brought to things necessary : So that for this Reason, as also to let our Enemies see, that we did not break Communion with them for Indifferent things, many things were retain'd at the beginning of the Reformation, that were afterwards Reform'd. In the days of *Edw. VI.* the Liturgy and Publick Service of the Church was Corrected and Amended : And this was done with all the Care and Deliberation imaginable, and the King and Parliament took the best Advice in the doing of it that cou'd be had either at home or abroad. Which makes me, indeed, admire to hear every illiterate Dissenter find so many Faults in the Liturgies and Worship of the Church of *England*, that was so well approv'd of then by all those Holy Bishops and Martyrs that were our first Reformers, and by *Calvin*, *Bucer*, and all the Eminent Divines beyond Seas. 'Tis very strange to think that such Excellent Men, and Men of such indefatigable Pains, and great Integrity, as *Cranmer*, *Ridly*, *Latimer*, and *Bradford*, &c. were, after all their diligent Enquiry, and fervent Prayers to God, that he would direct them in the Performance and Management of so great a Work, cou'd not after all, spy so much as a mote of Unlawfulness, in those things that now every Dissenting Preacher, though ne-

ver so raw or illiterate ; yea, and the very meanest of the People can see such Beams in. 'Tis certain, that our terms of Communion are the same, or rather easier now than they were then, as most of the Dissenters will allow ; and as Dr. *Stillingsfleet* has prov'd at large, in his *Mischiefs of Separation*.

During all the Reign of King *Edward VI.* there were no Divisions in this Church about these Matters. There might have been some in those Days that might have wish'd for a farther Reformation, as no Church ever yet wanted such ; But there was no such thing as Separation from the Church, and going to separate Meetings upon that account : No, 'twas so far from that, that when actual Separation was first begun in Queen *Elizabeth's* Days, those who practis'd it, were severely Condemned by most of those who were very desirous of a farther Reformation.

The time when Separation first began in the Church of *England*, was about the Beginning of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign : For after Queen *Mary's* Death, the Ministers and others, who were Banished and Fled in her time, began to flock back again into *England* ; but the Impressions which were made on some of our Divines, during their Banishment ; especially those who continued at
Geneva,

Geneva, (a place always inveterate against Ceremonies) did not wear off at their return home; but after a little while, they began to insinuate into the People (who are ever fond of Novelty) a hatred to the Livery of Antichrist, as they call'd the Vestments, and Ceremonies; upon which, some of the People began to Separate; and this was the first occasion of pressing Uniformity with Laws and Penalties. The Queen and Parliament now began to see it Necessary for the Quiet of the Church and Nation, and for the avoiding farther Divisions upon this account, that all the Clergy shou'd give some assurance of their Conformity and Obedience to the Laws of this Land, and the Religion Establish'd by Law, and to the Orders and Discipline of the Church, agreeable to Law. And accordingly, certain Articles and Subscriptions were agreed on; and such of the Clergy as would not Subscribe thereto, were Suspended: They who were Suspended, writ to their Oracle at *Geneva*, *Beza*, who was a Man of greatest Authority with them, to know what they shou'd do; *Beza* advises them, That if they cannot otherwise be continued in their Offices, but by wronging their Consciences, that they should submit, and live quietly, but by no means to exercise their Function

Upon against the Will of their Queen and Bi-
 shops ; for, says he, *We tremble*
 * See Dr. Stilling- *at the thoughts of that* *. But he
 neels. *Mischief of* tells them farther, That though
Separation, Pag. 20, he does not approve of the Ce-
 21, &c. remonies, yet being not Evil in themselves, he
 does not think them of that moment as that
 the Ministers shou'd leave their Functions
 for them, or the People forsake the Ordinan-
 ces, rather than hear those who did Conform.
 And it seems, indeed, that the more Serious
 and Learned of those Divines, who in their
 Banishment had suck'd in a Dislike to the
 Church of *England* way of Worship, did not
 think fit to Separate from it upon that ac-
 count, or to endeavour too hastily the Re-
 forming of it ; for Dr. *Burnet* in his Book of
 Travels, tells us, That in *Switzerland* he met
 with several Letters from some of our Eng-
 lish Clergy to *Bullinger*, who had procur'd a
 kind Reception to be given to several of them
 in *Switzerland*, during the Persecution of
 Queen *Mary*. By which Letters it appears,
 that several of the Clergy who had been be-
 yond Seas, upon their return Home, did en-
 deavour to Perswade Queen *Elizabeth* to let
 the Matters of the Habits for the Clergy, &c.
 fall ; Particularly *Sand's*, afterwards Arch-
 bishop of *York*, *Horn* afterwards Bishop of
Winchester,

Winchester, Jewel and Grindal: But *Grindal* in one of his Letters to *Bullinger*, says, They were all resolved to submit to the Laws, and to wait for a fit opportunity to reverse them: And he laments the ill Effects of the Opposition that some had made to them; He also thanks *Bullinger* for the Letter he wrote to justify the lawful Use of the Habits, &c. And in fine, they all allow'd the lawfulness, but not the fitness of them; and that they ought to submit to the Law, till it shou'd please God to reverse it lawfully. See *Burnet's Travels*, p. 51, 52.

But though the wiser sort among them did not think fit to proceed to actual Separation from the Church, upon the account of those indifferent things; yet some there were of a more fierce and turbulent Spirit, who had not Patience to wait God's leisure, but either a Reformation must be made presently according to their wild Notions; and the Queen and Parliament must tack about immediately to their Pleasures, or else to your Tents, O *Israel*; They will set up Churches of their own, and forsake us utterly as a Superstitious and Idolatrous Church, not fit to be communicated with.

And thus began our unhappy Divisions in the Church of *England*. I shall not trouble

ble my self to trace this Matter through the Reigns of Queen *Elizabeth*, King *James* the First, and King *Charles* the First; nor to shew how they daily increas'd and grew wider: Nor the many Sub-Divisions, and Scandalous Breaches that were daily made among themselves, ever since the beginning of Separation: As between *Brown* and *Barrow*, *Brown* and *Harrison*, *Barrow* and *Johnson*, *Johnson* and *Ainsworth*; who all left *England* to gather Separate Churches to themselves in the *Low-Countries*; But scarce had been well there, till they fell out all among themselves; one Man and his Company being accurs'd, and avoided by the other and his Followers, and the one Church receiving the Persons excommunicated by the other; till they became ridiculous to Spectators, and at last some of them were glad to return into *England*. This Matter has been so fully related by Dr. *Stillingsfleet*, in his *Mischiefs of Separation*, p. 51, 52, &c. that 'twere needless here to repeat it.

I shall only take notice, that ever since King *James* the Second's Accession to the Crown, the Church of *England* had laid aside all thoughts of Controversie with the Dissenters, in hopes that they wou'd have joyn'd for their common Safety with them,

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in stopping the Inundation of Popery, that was ready to break in upon these Nations, and swallow them both up. But while most of our Eminent Divines of the Church of *England*, as *Dr. Tillotson*, *Dr. Stillingfleet*, *Dr. Burnet*, *Dr. Comber*, *Dr. Sherlock*, and the rest, were imploy'd in writing against the Incendiaries of *Rome*; the Dissenters, our Brethren, instead of assisting us, were making themselves ready for War with us; as appear'd soon after. For when God Almighty had happily plac'd King *William* in the Throne, a Convocation was immediately call'd, in hopes that some Terms of Accommodation might have been Agreed upon between us; And which, in all probability, wou'd have taken Effect; if the Dissenting Ministers had been as forward as we; for how much inclin'd our Clergy were to a Reconciliation (notwithstanding the Aspersions laid on them by the Dissenters, of their having no such Design) does sufficiently appear by several of their Writings; See *Dr. Tillotson's* Sermon Preached at the *Torkshire* Feast, *Anno* 1679. *Pag.* 28. And *Dr. Sherlock's* Sermon before the Lord Mayor, *Nov.* 1688. See likewise the Petition of the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, and the other Bishops; for which they were committed to the *Tower*:

And see the Articles recommended by the Archbishop of *Canterbury* to all the Bishops within his Province. And Dr. *Stillingsfleet's* Preface to his *Mischiefs of Separation*. By all which, it sufficiently appears how desirous they were for a Reconciliation. But instead of listning to any such thing, does our Dissenters break forth into open Acts of Hostility, and at that very time when we were actually Treating of Accommodation with them, do they Publish several of their Books, one upon the back of another ; in which, they endeavour nothing less than the total Overthrow of our Church, by pretending to prove, That the Constitution of our Church is New, and Unlawful; and that our Worship is Idolatrous and Sinful. Had this been at a Time when their way of Worship was not tolerated, or ours impos'd on them with Penalties, they had been the more excusable ; Or, had we began to expose their *Extempore* way of Praying, as we might easily have done ; but at such a time as that was, to become the Aggressors, was ungrateful as well as unseasonable. But now, since the Dissenters have thought fit to revive the Controversie between us, I hope they cannot take it unkindly of us, if we endeavour to Vindicate our Church, and to remove those
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Aspersions that they have groundlessly cast upon her. But this has been done so learnedly and fully by so many of our Learned Divines already, that I will not pretend to do it better, or to say much more than what they have said before me ; I shall only here lay down briefly the Substance of what I have Collected out of the best Authors on both sides, that have writ lately on this Subject : For there may be some who wou'd be willing to be satisfied in this Matter, and yet can neither bestow the Time nor Pains to read all the Books of Controversie over, which have been writ on this Subject.

First then, We will examine the Pleas which the Dissenters use for Separation, and show the insufficiency of them ; and that they do not justify Separation according to their own Principles.

All the Pleas at this time made use of for Separation, may be reduced to these Three Heads :

First, Such as relate to the Constitution of our Church.

Second, To the terms of Communion with it.

Third, To the Consciences of Dissenters.

As to the First, to wit, such as relate to the Constitution of our Churches ; They say,

First, That our Parochial Churches are not according to Christ's Institution, as being different from those of the Congregational way. Secondly, That our Diocesan Bishops are Unlawful. Thirdly, That our National Church has no Foundation, and wants Discipline; all being swallowed up in the Bishops: And the Pastors of every Parish who ought to have full Power to execute every part of it, are depriv'd thereof. And Fourthly, That the People are depriv'd of their right of chusing their own Pastors.

First, say they, Our Parochial Churches are not according to Christ's Institution. For Christ, they say, instituted no other kind of Churches, than particular Congregations, to which he gave full Power and Authority to govern themselves, distinctly and Independent of all other Churches.

But where have they Authority for this Opinion? Where do they find that Churches were limited to particular Congregations? not in Scripture; for there is no tolerable Proof, that the Churches planted by the Apostles, were of this Nature. 'Tis possible at first there might have been no more Christians in a City, than might meet together in one Congregation; But where doth it appear, that when they multiply'd into more
Congre-

Congregations, they made new and distinct Churches under new Officers, with a separate Power of Government; of this Dr. *Stillingfleet* says, he is well assur'd there is no mark or Footstep in the New Testament, or the whole History of the Primitive Church. If they will follow the plain instances of Scripture, they may better limit Churches to Private Families, than to particular Congregations; for of that we have a plain instance in Scripture, *Rom. 16. 3. 5. Col. 4. 15.* in the House of *Priscilla* and *Aquila*, but not a word of the other: And if they wou'd keep to these plain instances of Scripture, they might fully enjoy the Liberty of their Consciences, and avoid the Scandal of breaking the Laws.

But the Scripture is so far from making every Congregation an Independent Church, that it plainly shews us, the Notion of a Church was then the same with a Diocess, or all the Christians of a City, which were under the Inspection of one Bishop: For, if we observe the Language of the Scripture, we shall find this Observation not once to fail; that when Churches are spoken of, they are the Churches of a Province: As the Churches of *Judea*, *1 Thess. 2. 14.* The Churches of *Asia*, *1 Cor. 16. 19.* Of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, *Acts 15. 41.*

Churches of *Galatia*, 1 *Cor.* 16. 1. *Gal.* 1. 2. Churches of *Macedonia*, 2 *Cor.* 8. 1. But when all the Christians of a City are spoken of, it is still call'd the Church of that City ; as, the Church of *Antioch*, the Church at *Corinth*, the Church of *Ephesus*, &c. So that it seems plain from the Testimony of Scripture, that Churches were not limited to particular Congregations, unless they will say, that all the Christians in the largest of these Cities mention'd in Scripture, were no more than cou'd conveniently meet in one Congregation ; which shall be shown to be otherwise hereafter.

But suppose we shou'd grant that the Apostolick Churches were Congregational (as 'tis plain they were not) what then ? that might have been from the Circumstances of Times, or small number of Christians in those Days ; must it therefore follow that they must always continue so ? Why do they not wash one anothers Feet, as Christ did, and

* And if they must keep so precisely to the Practice of those Days, why does any of their Ministers marry a Second Wife ? For St. Paul says plainly, Let Bishops and Deacons be the Husbands of one Wife, 1 *Tim.* 3. v. 2. & 12.

commanded his Apostles to do the same* : So the first Civil Government was by God's own Institution over Families ; they may by the same Rule think themselves bound

bound to overthrow Kingdoms, to bring things back to God's first Institution. From whence it appears how ridiculous that fancy of theirs is, That the Scripture is the only Rule of all things pertaining to Discipline and Worship; and that we must stick so precisely to the Letter of it, and to the practice of those Days, as that 'tis not lawful to vary from it in any little indifferent Circumstance for the sake of Publick Order, or Con-
veniency.

But as this notion of Congregational Churches does not agree with the words of the New Testament; so neither does it with the Judgment and Practice of the Primitive Church; For by the ancient Canons of the Church it appears, That the Notion of a Church, was the same with that of a Diocess, which comprehended many Congregations, or Parishes. See Canons *Nicen.* 6, 15, 16. *Constant.* c. 6. *Chalcedon* 17. 20. 26. *Antioch* c. 2. 5. *Codex Eccles. Africa*, c. 53. 55. *Concil. Gangra.* c. 6. *Concil. Carthag.* c. 10, 11.

And thus much as to the first Objection against the Constitution of our Church, as differing from those of the Congregational way; and therefore not of Christ's Institution.

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The Second Objection against the Constitution of our Church is, That our Diocesan Churches and Bishops are unlawful ; For say they, 'Tis making a new Species of Churches and Church-Government , without God's appointment ; For, says Mr. *Baxter* , according to Christ's Institution, no Church must be bigger , than that the same Bishop may perform the Pastoral Office to them in present Communion : And so he will have three sorts of Bishops by Divine Right : First, General Bishops , that in every Nation are over many Churches. Secondly, *Episcopi Gregis* , or Ruling Pastors of Single Congregations , which are all true Presbyters. Thirdly, *Episcopi Praesides* ; which are the Presidents of the Presbyters in particular Churches : This is Mr. *Baxter's* Notion of Bishops : But others are not of his Mind, and will allow of but one kind of Bishop, and such they make the Pastor of every Congregation.

But that both these Notions of Episcopacy are false, will appear ; For that First, 'twas an inviolable Rule in the Primitive Church, that there must be but one Bishop in a City, though 'twere never so large ; for our Saviour having left no Rule about Limits, the Apostles follow'd the Form of the Empire, planting

planting in every City a complete and entire Church, whose Bishop, as to his Power and Jurisdiction, in Ecclesiastical Matters, resembled that of the Chief Magistrate of the City; the Presbyters, that of the Senates; and the several Churches, the several Corporations. So says Dr. *Still*. in his *Mischiefs of Separation*, p. 237. and quotes *Origen*, c. *Cels.* l. 3. and Dr. *Maurice* in his *Def. of Dioces. Episcopacy*, p. 377, &c. affirms the same, and proves it at large. And as far as the Territories of the City extended it self, so far did the Diocess of the Bishop extend; for the Church and the City had but one Territory.

But though this be a thing agreed upon by most Learned Men of all Persuasions, that there was but one Bishop in a City in the Primitive Church; yet because some may be so hardy as to deny this, I will appeal to the Practice of the *African* Church; for which Mr. *Baxter*, Dr. *Owen*, and the rest of the Dissenters, express an esteem above all other Churches. 'Twas an inviolable Rule among the *African* Churches, that there must be but one Bishop in a City, though never so large and populous. See *Cod. Eccl. Africa*, c. 71. And at the famous Conference at *Carthage*, between the Catholick and Donatist Bishops, by the Command of *Constantine*
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the Emperor, who was become Christian, the Rule on both sides agreed was, but One Bishop in a City, or Diocess. See *Conference of the First Day*. And if there cou'd have been more than one Bishop in a City, the two great Schisms of the Donatists in *Africa*, and the Novatian at *Rome*, might have been avoided; but instead hereof, see how St. *Cyprian* among others, aggravates the Schism of *Novatius*, for being chosen Bishop in the same City where *Cornelius* was chosen before; For, says he, *since there cannot be a second after the first, whosoever is made Bishop, where one is made already, is not another Bishop, but none at all*, Cypr. Epist. 52. n. 4. And the same St. *Cyprian* in his Epistle 55. n. 6. 9. declares, That to have only one Bishop in a City, was the best means to prevent Schism. See St. *Cypr. de Unitate Eccles.* n. 3, 4. And St. *Augustine* in his Epistle 162. to the same purpose.

But now that 'tis so plainly prov'd that there was never allow'd but one Bishop in a City in the Primitive Church, they have no way to reconcile this to their Hypothesis, but by endeavouring to prove that either the Cities were very small in those days, or else the number of Christians in them were so few, as that they might all conveniently

meet

meet in one Congregation. And this they are not satisfied to do in the ordinary Cities, which Mr. *Clarkson* in his Book of *Primitive Episcopacy* affirms, were no larger than our ordinary Market-Towns in *England*. But even in the very largest, and most populous Cities, they will not allow that there were more Christians than cou'd conveniently meet together in one Church to serve God; as in *Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, Carthage*, and the rest: All which far exceeded any now in the World, both for largeness and number of People. This seems to be very strange. Old *Rome* was at that time a City so large and populous, that it excell'd *London*, as it is at this day, as far as *London* now does New *Rome*, and had by Computation at that time above 1000000 Inhabitants; as Dr. *Maurice* shows in his *Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy*, p. 340. And seems indeed to be very probable, if one considers those vast and mighty Pieces of Workmanship, that appear to have been done there; the Ruins of which are to be seen at this day, as Dr. *Burnet* in his *Travels* tells us, who gathers from thence, That that City must have been vastly populous about that time. And it was in *Aurelius* his days 50 Miles in Circumference, Dr. *M.* p. 212. And yet will
Mr.

Mr. *Clarkson* allow no more Christians in this great City than cou'd meet in one Congregation. So of *Alexandria*, which was 15 Miles in Circumference, according to *Pliny*, l. 5. 9. and the rest, all greater far than *London* now is. But to serve their turn they will reduce them all to the narrow limits of a single Congregation, and by consequence give all the rest to the Devil, by making them Unchristian, Hereticks, Schismaticks, &c.

'Tis strange that Christianity shou'd make no better a Progress, considering the largeness of the Cities, and Multitude of People in them; and considering the Care and Industry of the Apostles and Learned Fathers of those Ages, and their extraordinary Gifts; that in so large and populous a City as *Rome*, Christianity shou'd gain no more Profelytes in 300 Years, than cou'd meet all in one Church, notwithstanding *St. Paul* himself had Preach'd there for many Years: The very *Quakers* in *London*, which is not comparable to Old *Rome*, have made more Profelytes already, than the Apostles in much longer time; for were all the *Quakers* in *London* assembled in one Congregation, I doubt that never a Church in the Kingdom wou'd be found large enough to contain them.

But

But besides, if the number of Christians were so few as these Dissenters wou'd make them, how was it possible for them to possess themselves of the whole Roman Empire in less than 300 Years? They had no Interest at Court nor in the Army ; but were persecuted by the Emperors all that time, unless in two Reigns ; so that there can be no other Human Cause assign'd for it , but their great Numbers.

But farther 'tis plain that there were some great Cities entirely Christian from the Apostles days, as *Cesaria*, and *Lydda*, *Acts* 9. 35. and others. So that in the first 300 Years, whole Cities and Countries being become Christian, as *Eusebius* affirms, *Præp. Evang.* l. 1. p. 12, 13: 'twas impossible for a single Congregation to contain a quarter of the Christians of a City, much less of a whole Diocess ; For besides the large and populous City, every Bishop had a Territory within his Diocess, which extended it self for several Miles round the City. For every City had a large Territory, as it were a County round about it, which was under the Jurisdiction of the Civil Magistrate, who govern'd the City, and as far as the Jurisdiction of the Magistrate reach'd in Civil Matters, so far did the Jurisdiction of the Bishop reach in Ecclesiastical

ftical Matters. See *Can. Apostolic. 34.* by which a Bishop is forbid to do any thing without the consent of his Metropolitan or Archbishop, but what relates to his own Diocess, and the Territories under it; And see *Can. Antioch 9. & 10.*

But that the Bishops Territories and Jurisdiction extended far beyond the Walls or Bounds of the City is most evident; for *Theodoret*, who was Bishop of *Cyrus*, had a Diocess 40 Miles square, and yet he reckon'd his Episcopacy of Divine Institution. See his *Epist. 42.* And he had within his Diocess 800 Parish Churches, as appears by his *Epist. 113. to Leo.* This is an Instance so clear against our Dissenters, that *Mr. Baxter*, and *Mr. Clarkson*, and the rest, have no way to Answer it, but first that it came from the *Vatican Library*; which Objection is fully removed by *Dr. Stillingfleet* in his *Mischief of Separation*, p. 256. and by *Dr. Maur. Def. of Dioc. Episc.* p. 396. and this *Epist. of Theod.* prov'd to be his own, by comparing it with his other Writings; and also by the clear Testimony of *Liberatus*, who infallibly knew *Theodoret's* Stile and Writings. Neither does it follow, that because it came from the *Vatican Library*, therefore it must not be Authentick: But when People are Drowning, rather

rather than sink they will catch hold of a Bull-rush.

The other Exception they take to this Testimony of *Theodore* is, That he was not Bishop of a single Diocese, but of a Province; and that *Theodore* was an Archbishop: but that *Cyprus*, of which he was then Bishop, was no Metropolis at that time, nor *Theodore* Primate of a Province, but under a Metropolitan, appears by his 16 Ep. and by his 81, 82, 34, 94, and 161. *Alexander* was then his Metropolitan.

But *Theodore* was not the only Bishop that had such a large Diocese; for St. *Chrysostom* had one full as large, and which contained as many Parishes; he was Bishop of *Constantinople*, and all the Territories there to belonging, and did not think it in his Conscience too large; for if he did, so good a Man as he, would either have divided or quitted it. And *Athanasius* was Bishop of *Alexandria* and the Territories belong to it; for he says, Ap. p. 781, 802. *Maoretis* is a Region belonging to *Alexandria*, and all the Churches there are immediately subject to the Bishop of *Alexandria*.

But because Dr. *Owen*, Mr. *Baxter*, Mr. *Cotton* and the rest, have made choice of the Church of *Carthage* in *Africk*, in St. *Cyprian's*

an's time, to make their appeals to; Dr. *Stillington*, to avoid all Cavils, (as he tells us) has chosen that very Church to be decided by, as to the Episcopal Government now in dispute between us. And therefore, first he proves that there were a great number of Presbyters, belonging to the Church of *Carthage* at that time; and therefore not likely to be one single Congregation. And this he proves, out of St. *Cyprian's* own *Epistles* in his Banishment. Particularly in his 5th. Book, Ep. 28. he complains, that a great number of his Clergy were absent, and the few that remain'd, were hardly sufficient for their Work.

And that these Presbyters, and the whole Church were under the particular care and government of St. *Cyprian*, as their Bishop, appears by his own words, *Lib. 3. Ep. 10.* and 12. to the People of *Carthage*; he complains to them of his Presbyters, that they did not reserve to their Bishop that honour due to his place; for that they received Penitents to Communion, without *Imposition of Hands* by the Bishop, &c. And in his *Epist. 28.* he threatens to Excommunicate those Presbyters that should do so for the future. And all the other Bishops gave their approbation to St. *Cyprian* for so doing.

And

And the same *St. Cyprian* in his 3 *Book, Ep.* 65. tells them that a Bishop in the Church is in the place of Christ; and that Disobedience to him is the occasion of Schisms and Disorders. See more fully concerning this matter, in *Dr. Stillingfleet's Mischiefs of Separation*, p. 228, 229. &c. And now since *Dr. Owen*, *Mr. Baxter* and the rest, have agreed to appeal to the Church of *Carthage*, we must suppose they allow no Deviations in that Church, from the Primitive Institution, and what that was then, any one may judge.

And *St. Augustine* was another Bishop in the *African Church*; he was Bishop of *Hippo Regia*, the Diocess of which extended at least Forty Miles, as appears by *St. Augustine's own Epist.* 162.

'Tis true, the *African Church* came most near the Congregational way of any other, the Diocess being smaller by reason of the many Sectaries there; the *Donatists*, and many others: And that is the Reason, *Mr. Baxter* and the rest express so great an Esteem for it. But that their Bishopricks were much too large, to serve either the *Presbyterians* or *Independents* turn; and, that they never allowed more than one Bishop in the largest Cities, sufficiently appears by what has

been said. And in the *African* Code, there is a Canon that says expressly ; no Bishop shall leave his Cathedral Church, and go to any other Church in his Diocess to reside there, See *Codex Eccl. Africa* c. 71. Which shows that the Bishops Territories and Jurisdiction extended into distant Places from the City, as well in the *African* Churches as in others.

I shall only add to this, that *Calvin* look'd upon it as a Thing out of dispute among Learned Men, that a Church did not only take in the *Christians* of a City in the Primitive Times, but of the adjacent Country also. See *Calv. Instit.* l. 4. c. 4. n. 2.

But though there were never more than one Bishop in a City, in the Primitive Church,

* V. Conc. Eph.
Part 2. Art. 1.

* yet some Bishops have had Two or more Cities in their Diocess. *Timothy* was Bishop of *Farmissus* and *Eudocias* ; *Athanasius* was Bishop of *Diveltus* and *Sozopolis*. And there have been some Bishopricks that have had no City at all in them, but only Villages, for there were some Countries that had no Cities in them ; so have we at this Day, Bishops in *Ireland* and *Wales* that have no Cities in their Diocess : But it cannot be prov'd that the Jurisdiction of the Bishop,
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and the extent of his Diocess was confin'd to any single Village. So far from that, that by the Canon of *Sardica* VI. all the Bishops Assembled at *Sardica* agree, That it shall by no means be lawful to Ordain any Bishops in Villages or small Cities, that the Dignity of a Bishop may not be contemptible from the meanness of the Place.

But, says Mr. *Clarkson* and the rest, The Apostles Ordain'd Elders in every Church, and then Mr. *Clarkson* names the places, to wit, *Antioch*, *Iconium*, *Lystra*, and other Villages: and these Elders or Presbyters they will have Bishops. But first, I say, That during the Apostle's days, the names Bishop and Presbyter were commonly used, the one for the other; (but not after, as shall be show'd hereafter) and therefore these Elders, or Presbyters here spoken of may be as well taken for ordinary Presbyters or Priests, as for Bishops. But allowing these Presbyters were Bishops, what advantage will it be to them? for first, it does not appear, that the Apostles confin'd their Authority to those places, but the contrary is evident; and unless they can prove this, it will not serve their turn. But, Secondly, these Cities over which the Apostles appointed Elders, were large Cities at

that time, by much too great to come together in one Congregation. *Iconium* was then a Metropolitan, and had many other Cities under it. And the rest were all large Cities.

But before I conclude this point I must make one Observation, and that is, That Mr. *Clarkson*, to prove that a Bishop of a City had no more but one Congregation, undertakes to shew how small some Cities were; but 'tis remarkable he quotes for his Authority some Author who speaks of them long before there were any Bishops; and because they might have been small places then, will needs have them to be so in the days of the Apostles, which is very ridiculous; for under the *Roman* Emperours, both the *Roman* and the *Grecian* Cities were at their height, and did very much surpass both for their magnificence and number of people, any that have been before or since; nor is this to be wonder'd at, since our Cities do now stand upon much narrower Foundations as to their constitution; our Cities have seldom any Liberties half a mile beyond their Walls; and are generally but an Assembly of Trades-men; whereas the *Roman* Cities had each a Territory, as it were a County belonging to it, which was under the jurisdiction of the City

City Magistrate ; and the Citizens were the Lords of the adjacent Country.

I have now shew'd that the Government of the Church by Dioceſan Biſhops, is agreeable to the practice of the beſt and pureſt Ages of the Church, and to the Judgment of the wiſeſt and holieſt Fathers of it. And that their Power and Jurisdiction was as abſolute, and extended as far, or farther than any Biſhops this day in *England*. I ſhall ſhew hereafter that Epiſcopal Government, as now ſettled in *England*, has been, and is at this day, commended and approved of by all the moſt Eminent Divines beyond Seas.

Perhaps ſome may ſay, if the Government of the Church by Dioceſan Biſhops, be ſo agreeable to that of the Primitive Church ; and approved of by other reform'd Churches, as we pretend it is ; how comes it that they all did not follow the pattern of *England*, and become all Dioceſan Churches ? I anſwer, They may as well ask us, Why all the Nations of the World that were ſubject to the *Roman* Emperors, did not upon the decay of the *Roman* Empire, when they reſum'd their juſt Rights of Government to themſelves, become all Monarchies, according to the Pattern of *England*. Some Nations

besides *England*, *Ireland* and *Scotland*, did assume Episcopal Government ; as *Denmark*, *Sweden*, &c. but perhaps it was not consistent with the present Circumstances, or Politick Constitution of all places at the time of the Reformation, to set up Episcopal Government, as indeed it was not. And therefore since neither Episcopal, nor any other particular kind of Government is so essential to a Church, as that a true Church may not be without it in case of indispensable Necessity ; they put themselves some under one Form of Government, some under another, as was most agreeable to their present constitution ; but with this Caution every where, That all Protestants of every whole Church, be the Government what it will, should be oblig'd to Conform to the Establish'd Church in which they liv'd : For though every National or whole Church had a Power to chuse what kind of Government they pleased for themselves, yet 'twas never allow'd that particular scrupulous People among themselves, had Power to do so too ; This Power of subdividing was never pretended to, nor practis'd in any other Nation since the Reformation, but in *England*. So that though they do all allow the Antiquity and Usefulness of Episcopal Government ; yet since 'tis not
Essential

Essential to a true Church no more than that of the *Presbyterian* or *Independent*, nor convenient at this time for all places, some may refuse it; and yet it does not follow that we in *England* should do so, since 'tis convenient for us, and more agreeable to the Laws and Constitution of these Kingdoms, and comes by much nearer the Practice of the Primitive Churches, than any other whatsoever.

But they say, we make Episcopal Government Essential to a true Church, for that we will suffer none to execute the Office of a Minister here in *England*, unless they be ordain'd by a Bishop. To this I answer, 'Tis plain, we do not make Episcopal Government Essential to a true Church; For we allow all the Reform'd Churches to be true Churches, and Communicate with them, and yet some of them have no Diocesan Bishops. 'Tis true, by the Laws of this Church and Nation, none are to be admitted to execute the Office of a Minister in any Cathedral or Parish Church or Chapel, nor to hold any Ecclesiastical Benefice within these Kingdoms, but such as are willing to submit to the Orders and Government of this Church, and the Laws of the Land: And therefore since both the Laws of this Church and Nation do require that all Ministers who desire to serve
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in this Church, shall declare publicly that they assent to and approve of our Form of Worship, &c. and are willing to use the same as the Church appoints, and that they shall receive their Ordination, and Licence to execute their Office from the Bishops; 'Tis but reasonable that such as want these Qualifica-

** The Church of England does not say absolutely that all those Ministers who want Episcopal Ordination are no true Ministers; but only that none shall be accounted a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, so as to execute their Function in the Church of England, unless they be once Ordain'd by a Bishop; as appears by the Preface to the Ordination.*

tions, shou'd be refus'd the Liberty of executing their Office in these Kingdoms. * But the reason we refuse them is not so much because that *Presbyterian Ordination* does not make them true Ministers, according to God's Law; (as though no instance can be given

of Ordination, without a Bishop in Scripture or Antiquity; but all to the contrary) because they stubbornly refuse to submit to our Laws and Constitutions, and condemn the lawful Authority under which God has plac'd them, and commanded them that they should obey. And this is evident from the Statute of 14 Car. 2. In which there is a particular Proviso, That all Ministers of Foreign re-form'd Churches, who come into this Kingdom by the King's Permission, are to be excepted

cepted out of, and excus'd from the Penalties of that Act. And this Custom of requiring Conformity, and Subscriptions from all who desire to be admitted to the Office of the Ministry, is agreeable to the Practice of every settled Church that has been ever since Christ's days; as will appear hereafter.

The 3d. Objection against the Constitution of our Church is, That our * National Church, which we call *The Church of England*, has no Foundation, and wants Discipline; All being incroach'd and swallow'd up in the Bishops; and the Pastors of every Parish, who ought to have full Power to execute every part of it, are depriv'd thereof.

** By National Churches, are meant the whole Churches of such Nations as upon the decay of the Roman Empire resumed their just Right of Government to themselves, both in Church and State.*

But this is false; for the Presbyters in our Church, have as great Power in Ecclesiastical Matters, as ever they had in the Primitive Church. What Power are they depriv'd of by the Bishops that they had then? By the Laws of our Church, no Rules of Discipline, no Articles of Doctrine, no Form of Worship can be introduc'd by the Bishops, or impos'd upon any, without the consent of the whole Presbytery of the Nation in Convocation, who appear either in Person or by Proxy.

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The only Authority that the Bishops of the Church of *England* have above the Presbyters is, Government, Ordination, and Censures; which were all appropriated to the Apostles, and Bishops in the Primitive Church: *St. Cyprian* assures us it was so in the *African Church*, in his Third Book, *Ep.* 10. & 12. 28. 27. And so it was in *St. Augustine's Time*. See *Cod. Eccl. Afr.* c. 6, 7, 9, &c.

But, say they, the Power of Ordination is taken away from the Presbyters, and lodg'd solely in the Bishops; and 'tis plain (say they) in the Apostles days the Presbyters did Ordain; for *Timothy* was ordain'd by laying on the hands of the Presbytery, *1 Tim.* 4. 14. But *Dr. Hammond* in his Paraphrase on this Text says, That these Presbyters here spoken of, who ordain'd *Timothy*, were Apostles: That *Timothy* was ordain'd by *St. Paul* is most evident; for *St. Paul* in his Second Epistle to *Timothy*, ch. 1. v. 6. says, *I put thee in mind, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the laying on of my hands.* And the Apostles might then have been likely enough call'd *Presbyters*; for that during the Apostles time, Bishops and Presbyters were the same, and sometimes us'd the one for the other; as appears plainly by comparing

ing 1 *Tim.* 4. 14: with 2 *Tim.* 1. 6. In the former Verse, St. Paul bids *Timothy Neglect not the gift that is in him, by laying on the hands of the Presbyters*; And in the latter, he bids him, *Stir up the gift of God which is in you, by the laying on of my hands.*

For while the Apostles liv'd, they manag'd the Affairs of Government in the Church themselves, and therefore there were few or no Bishops in their days; but as they withdrew, they committed the Care and Government of Churches to such Persons as they appointed thereto, of which we have an uncontrollable Evidence in *Timothy* and *Titus*: So that although the Apostles left no Successors in *Eodem gradu*, as to those things that were extraordinary in them, as the Infallibility of their Doctrine, and the writing New Gospels, the Extent of their Power, &c. yet to other parts of their Apostolick Office, they had Successors, as in Teaching and Governing, and such like things that were not extraordinary. Which Power of Governing, Ordaining, &c. being given to such particular Presbyters as the Apostles thought fit for it, was properly the Episcopal Power: And thus these who were but Presbyters in the Apostles days, by the accession of this governing and ordaining Power, became Bishops after

after their Decease or Departure. And thus will all those seeming Differences between the words *Presbyter* and *Bishop*, spoken of in Antiquity, be reconcil'd. And herewith agrees the Opinion of Archbishop *Whitgift* and Bishop *Bilson*, and Dr. *Stillingsfleet* in his *Mischiefs of Separation*, p. 270. and many others. See King *Charles I.* his *Debates about Episcopacy*, more fully concerning this Matter.

But 'tis plain, that since the Apostles days, Presbyters were not Bishops, but a distinct Order from them: And this is agreed by most Ancient and Modern Writers. See among others, *Ignatius* his Epistle *ad Trall.* where he says, That without Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, it cannot be call'd a Church. And *Aerius* who declar'd, that there was no difference between a Bishop and a Presbyter, was represented by *Epiphanius* as a Prodigy, and his opinion Madness. See *Epiph. Har.* 74. n. 1. 3. So *Ischyrrus* pretended to be a Presbyter, because *Coluthus* had ordain'd him; but *Athanasius* represents it as a Monster, that one shou'd esteem himself a Presbyter, who was ordain'd by one who died himself a Presbyter. See Dr. *Maur.* *Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy*, p. 451. And in the Primitive Church, if a Bishop himself did Ordain
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any one against the Canons and Establish'd Discipline of the Church, they did not stick at declaring such Ordination void, and in some Cases to re-ordain. See *Can. Nicen.* 9, 10. 16. 19. and *Can. Antioch.* 73. 10, &c. What Sentence shall we think then they wou'd have pronounc'd against our *Presbyterian Ordination*, as practis'd here in *England*, contrary both to the Canons of the Church, and the Laws of the Land too.

But besides all this, the Plea which our Dissenters make for Separation upon this account, that the Presbyters are totally depriv'd of their Power of Ordaining, is false; For by the Canons of the Church of *England*, Four Presbyters are to assist the Bishop in giving Orders, and after Examination, to joyn in laying on of hands on the Person ordain'd. See *Can.* 31. and 35.

But another Objection which they make to the Church of *England*, for want of Discipline is, for that the Power of Excommunicating Notorious Offenders, is taken away from the Parochial Minister, and lodg'd only in the Bishop. But sure they who make this Objection, never read the 26th. Canon, which is one of them acknowledg'd to be the Authentick Church Canons: For that Canon says expressly, That no Minister shall admit any

any of his Flock to the Lord's Supper, who is known to be guilty of any Scandalous Sin, until he hath openly declar'd that he has truly repented. And in case the Offender continue obstinate, he must give an account to the Ordinary within 14 Days, who is then to proceed to greater Excommunication, for the other is call'd a *Penitential Excommunication*. So then it seems the Pastors are not totally depriv'd of the Power of censuring for Scandalous offences; nay, they have a greater and more absolute Power, than is allow'd them in many other Reform'd Churches; for indeed, the exercise of Discipline is a Work of so much Prudence and Difficulty, that the greatest Zealots for it, have not thought fit to trust it in the Hands of every Parochial Minister, and his particular Congregation. *Calvin* himself says, to do so, is contrary to the Apostolick Practice. See *Calv. Ep. 136*. And *Beza*, speaking of the Discipline of *Geneva*, in his *Ep. 20*. says, The Parochial Ministers proceed no farther than Admonition, but in case of Contumacy, they certifie the Presbytery of the City, who sit at certain times to hear all Censures relating to Discipline.

But allowing a Church wants true Discipline, does it therefore lose its Being, or justify

stify Separation? No sure, if so, there were few Presbyterian Churches to be found in the late times, many of them having no Discipline at all among them for many years, nor so much as the Lord's Supper administred in some parts of this Kingdom for ten or a dozen years together.

But now we come to the 4th. Objection against the Constitution of our Church, which is, That the People are depriv'd of their right of choosing their own Ministers.

Pray let me ask them how this Original and inherent Right (as Mr. Baxter calls it) of choosing their own Ministers, came to be lodg'd in the People? Was there not a Church to be form'd in the beginning? Did not Christ appoint Apostles, and give them Authority for that end? Where was the Church Power then lodg'd? Was it not in the Apostles? Did not they in all places as they planted Churches, appoint Officers to teach and govern them? And were not then the Pastors invested with a Power superior to that of the People? How came they then to lose it, or how came the People to pretend an original Right thereto? Besides, How cou'd the People make choice of Men for their fitness and abilities, when at that time

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their abilities depended so much on the Apostles laying on of their hands, for then the Holy Ghost was given to them. It seems then that this original and inherent Right was not in the People in the Apostles days, nor in the first Ages of the Church, for if it had, *St. Clement*, *St. Cyprian*, *St. Chrysostom*, &c. could not have been ignorant of it ; *St. Clement* says in his *Ep.* 54, 55, 56, 57. (the Apostles thought fit to reserve this Power of appointing Officers in the Church to themselves, to prevent the Contentions that might happen about it : And that all the People had to do, was to give testimony of the Person chosen ;) And to that end, 'tis true, the People were to be present at the nomination of a new Bishop ; for since, they were to be Men blameless and of good report ; 'twas but fit that the People that best knew his Life and Conversation, should be present to testify the same. And herewith agrees *St. Cyprian Ep.* 68. (whom *Mr. Baxter* vouches for the contrary) says he, (The Bishop shou'd be chosen in the presence of the People, that by their presence their Faults may be publish'd, or their good Actions commended,) but says not a word of the Peoples Power

Power of Electing him.

As to the Elections of Deacons, 'tis to be noted that 'twas properly no Church Power which they had, but they were Stewards of the Com-

mon Stock; and therefore 'twas but reasonable the Community should be satisfied in the choice of them. *St. Chrysostom* in his Book *de Sacerdotio*, complains much of the unfitness of the People to judge in such matters. So does *St. Augustine Ep. 110.*

And indeed, were there no other Reasons against the Peoples choosing their own Ministers, but the mischiefs that would necessarily attend it, 'twere sufficient; for when ever the People assum'd this Power of choosing, it caus'd so great Disturbances in the Church, that at *Antioch* the Divisions of the People about the choice of a Bishop, in the time of *Constantine*, had kindled such a Flame, as had almost destroy'd both Church and City. The like at *Rome* upon the choice of *Damasus*. And if the People have the Power of choosing their own Ministers, what shou'd hinder but there may be a Presbyterian, Independant, Anabaptist, Quaker and Papist teacher all in one Parish, and so this

All our Ordinations must be done in the publick view of the People, who are demanded of the Bishop, whether any of them can or will except against the Persons to be admitted. See the Form of Ordination in the Book of Common Prayer.

would set open a door to infinite Divisions.

And therefore to avoid the great Evils, and inconveniences of popular Elections, the Power of choosing their own Ministers was taken away from the People by several Councils, as 12. and 13. *Can. Conc. Laodicea*, *Conc. Antioch. c. 18. &c. Conc. 2d. of Nice. c. 3.*

The Reason that first gave Lay-men a title to the nomination of Ministers, was when Christian Princes and others, had given large Endowments to the Church, 'twas thought but just that they should have the nomination of the Ministers for those Churches that they had built and incow'd. And this was a Prerogative in the Kings of *England* ever since the first foundation of a Christian Church here, and long before any freedom of Elections was pretended to. See *Stat. 25. Edw. 3.* and the Case of the King's Ecclesiastical Power in Lord *Cook's 8th. Rep.* and the Case of *Præmunire* in Sir *John Davenant's Reports*, Case ult. And this title of Patronage has been confirmed to Lay-men by several Councils, as 1st. *Counc. of Orange, Anno Dom. 441.* 2d. *Counc. of Arles, Anno 452.* 9th. *Counc. of Toledo, &c.*

And

And this Right of presentation is not only us'd in *England*, but in other reform'd Churches: In *Denmark* the Archbishops, and Bishops are appointed by the King, so they are in *Swedeland*. So in other *Lutheran* Churches, the Superintendants are appointed by the several Princes, and the Patrons present before Ordination. The Synod of *Dort* hath a *Salvo* for the right of Patronage. In *France*, the Ministers are chosen by Ministers; at *Geneva* by the Council of State; who have Power likewise to depose them. And *Beza* in his *Ep.* 83. declares against the Peoples choosing their Ministers as a thing without any ground in Scripture. *Grotius Ep. ad Baatlaer Ep.* 62. p. 21. agrees herein. How comes then our *English* Dissenters to make this a ground of Separation, to wit, The depriving the People of their Right of choosing their own Ministers, when 'tis evident they never had any such Right, but when they got it by Usurpation; And 'tis contrary to the general practice of the Church in all Ages, and even to the practice of other reform'd Churches at this day.

But besides the unwarrantableness of the Peoples choosing their Ministers, and the great mischiefs that attend it, by making the

People run into Divisions and Factions; 'tis a thing very unreasonable in it self that such an ignorant, proud, unpeaceable sort of People, as Mr. Baxter himself confesses in his *Sacrilegia Dissert.* p. 102. &c. the ordinary sort of Christians to be, should be made judges of their Ministers abilities, and soundness of Doctrines; who are most apt to revile the best and gravest Ministers, as the same Mr. Baxter says himself in his *Cure of Divis.* p. 393. Sure 'tis more likely that the King and Parliament and the Governours of the Church shou'd provide able and fit Ministers for us, than such sort of People as these; unless any will be so ridiculous as to suppose that the Magistrates, and Clergy are all bad men, and the ignorant common People the only encouragers of Virtue.

They may say 'tis as unreasonable on the other hand, that all the People of a Parish shou'd be oblig'd to take a Minister put into the Cure by some young, raw, extravagant Heir that had the good Fortune to be born to an Estate, to which the Advowson did belong, but perhaps is as ignorant, and unfit to judge of the abilities of a Minister as the meanest in the Parish. To this I answer, That though such ignorant Persons may

may sometimes have the right of Presentation, yet they have not the Power of putting into the Cure any Minister they please, for the Patron has only the right of presenting his Clerk, who must be admitted and instituted by the Bishop, before the Cure is said to be full, and if the Bishop with the rest of his Clergy, after examination had, &c. do think him any way unqualified for the Cure of Souls, he may reject him, and put the Patron to present another qualify'd for the Office; which if he neglect to do within six Months from the time the Church became void, he shall lose his presentation for that turn, and the Bishop shall present. So that the Patron, it seems cannot put whom he will on the People for their Pastor, but is bound to find *Personam idoneam*, a fit Person.

And now before we pass from this matter, let us see whether the Civil Magistrate has Power to silence Ministers or not. Doubtless he has, otherwise 'tis impossible that any Kingdom should be safe; for since the generality of the People are so apt to be led by their Spiritual Guides, and take their Notions of Loyalty and Obedience from them, 'tis strange to imagine that Ministers shall be allow'd to Preach up Sedi-

tion, Heresy, or what Doctrine they please, and it shall not be in the Power of the Magistrate to silence them.

But say our Dissenters, we are call'd to the Office of the Ministry by God Almighty, and have received our Commission to Preach the Gospel from him; and therefore must not neglect to discharge our Duty in Obedience to any Power upon Earth, for we must obey God rather than man.

But first, I hope they will grant that when God Almighty gave them this Commission, he did not limit it to any certain place, but 'twas general to Preach the Word to all Nations, so that in obedience to God's Command, doubtless they ought to go and Preach in those Countries where their Preaching is most wanted, and will do God most service. There are many Countries in the World that know nothing of Christianity, and many that do, have not able Ministers enough to serve their turn; sure these Men that think themselves bound in Conscience to Preach, wou'd much better discharge their Consciences by going into those Countries, and Preaching to those poor People that are in so great want of it: Christ sent his Disciples to Preach to the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*. The Apostles, who doubtless had as universal a Commission

mission to Preach, they never went to abide in those Cities or Places where sound Teachers were settled before, but they chose to go into those parts where Christianity was least known, and their Preaching would do most good. Why will not our Non-conformist Ministers follow their example? Several of our foreign Plantations want able Ministers among them, they want Universities and famous Schools to breed them in, and therefore must needs be but poorly supplied. If they would leave this Nation, and go and Preach there, 'twould convince the World that they design'd nothing but God's Glory and the discharge of their own Consciences in desiring to Preach; but since they do not, 'tis evident whatever their pretences may be, that 'tis self-interest and their own conveniency, that makes them desire the liberty of Preaching in these Nations.

What have they to say to this? Indeed the best of them give but a very unsatisfactory Answer hereto. Mr. *Baxter* in his Answer to Dr. *Stillingfleet*, says, The Reason why they do not go to Preach among the *Indians* is, because they cannot speak their Language, and because many of them have Wives and Families which they cannot leave: But for his own part, he says, if he were
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but young enough, he would not trouble this censorious persecuting part of the World any longer : Mr. *Baxter* has not been always old, he was young enough when first he began to write against the Church of *England*, Why did he not go when first he was prohibited to Preach here, if he had, perhaps our Divisions about Matters of Religion, had been much narrower than now they are, and a reconciliation much more easy between us. As for their not speaking the Language, there are many of the New Plantations in *America*, &c. that understand *English* and *Latin*, and want able diligent Pastors among them. And as to all their other Reasons for not going, the leaving their Families, &c. they may carry them with them; but surely no Reasons of this kind, can come in competition with the great Advantage of propagating the Gospel of Christ, and the Peace and Quiet of three Kingdoms.

But again ; They say God has commanded them to preach the Gospel, and they must obey God rather than Man. So God has also commanded them to obey their Governours and Magistrates, and to preserve the Peace and Unity of the Church and Nation in which they live. Now since they must
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of necessity break one of these Commands by staying at home and preaching in separate Meetings; and may perform both by going to preach beyond Seas, certainly the best and safest way must be to doe the latter.

And if God Almighty has given them commission to preach, as they say, I am sure he has given them commission no where to disturb the Peace and Settlement of a Christian Church and State, especially a true Church. He bid them go and preach the Word, and teach all Nations, but we all know that the greatest Part of the World was then unconverted, and had no Christian Teachers and Ministers orderly settled among them; so that those whom Christ then sent could have come no where amiss, every one of them was to make as many Converts as he could, there being no limits put how far their particular Charge should extend, and no farther; but soon after, even in the Apostles days, when particular distinct Churches were gather'd, and committed to the Care of particular Persons, I suppose, none of our Dissenters will say, That any Ministers, by virtue of their general Commission, to teach all Nations, might have come into another Pastor's Congregation or Parish and preach
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in a separate Meeting without Licence, and draw as many People from their lawful Pastour, to whose Care they were particularly committed, as they could. No, they who did so were often condemn'd by *St. Paul*, as appears in many of his *Epistles*. And this is the very Case of the Church of *England*, with relation to our present *Dissenters*; Allowing their Commission to preach be as full as they pretend to, yet it gives them no Authority to invade other mens Rights, or to draw away the People from their lawful Ministers; And especially since, if they please, they may exercise their Office in other places, and do no Man wrong.

The Apostles had as full a Commission to preach as any of our *Dissenters* can pretend to, and something more extraordinary; and yet we don't find that they thought themselves oblig'd to preach directly in opposition to the civil Magistrate though a Heathen. 'Tis true, for the first 300 years Christianity had not generally the Laws to countenance and defend it, as now it has. So that the Apostles and Fathers of the Church could not have the Command or Authority of the civil Magistrate for what they did, yet they had his connivance, and never preached directly in opposition to his positive command.

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St. Paul says, *Acts* 14. 12. *They neither found me in the Temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the Synagogues, nor in the City.* And again, *Acts* 15. 8. *Neither against the Law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.* So it seems the practice of the Apostles was to preach the Gospel where they came so long as they were tolerated or conniv'd at by the Government. But as soon as they were prohibited by the Magistrate, they left that City or Place and went to the next, but thought it no ways their Duty to oppose the Will of their lawful Prince, though a Heathen. And will not our *Dissenters* shew the same respect to a Christian Prince that the Apostles did to Heathen Magistrates?

But whether Christian Magistrates have power to silence some Ministers, such as they think fit, or not, it is a thing questionless that has been practis'd by 'em in all Ages, ever since the time of *Constantine* the Great, which is near 1400 years. *Constantine* by his Edict suppress'd all separate Meetings, and among the rest the *Novatians*, and silenc'd their Preachers, though their Ordination was as good as any among our *Non-conformists*. See *Eusebius Vita Const.* lib. 3. cap.

cap. 63, 64, 65, 66. And St. *Augustine* did very much commend the Emperour for so doing. See *Aug. Ep.* 48. and see also his 4th Book against *Cresconius a Donatist*, ch. 51.

All the Reform'd Churches in the World, do, at this day, silence such Ministers as refuse to submit to the Orders and Government of their Church, and believe they have Power so to do. At *Geneva* their Council of State has the sole Power of Electing and Deposing Ministers. Nay, farther, by the Constitution of *Geneva*, they have Power not only to silence, but to excommunicate such Ministers as shall contemn the Authority of the Church, or by their obstinacy disturb the Order of it. In the *French Church*, if any refuse to subscribe to the Orders of their Church, he is to be declared a Schismatick! And *Calvin* himself, *Ep. Olevian.* pag. 311, and 122. says, Let him that will not submit to the Orders of a Society, be cast out.

But what need we go so far from home for Instances of this kind? Let us see what the Opinion of our own *Dissenters* heretofore was in this matter. First then in the great Dispute between the *Brownists* and the *Non-conformists* about the Ministers preaching, &c. against the Will of the Prince, the *Non-conformists* all agreed, That the Apostles had
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Power immediately from God to set up his Kingdom, but their Power was extraordinary, and under Heathen Magistrates. But our Ministers have no such extraordinary Power; And our Magistrates being Christian are much more to be respected. See *Gifford*, a Non-conformist Minister his Answer to *Barrow*: And see the Confutation of the *Brownists*, by several Non-conformists, who join'd together for that purpose; publish'd by one *Rathband* by their command, p. 51. And see Mr. *Bradshaw* his Answer to *Johnson*, to the same purpose; where he says, That the Magistrate had no Power to silence the Apostles, for that 'twas manifest by the silencing of them, was intended the utter extirpation of Christianity: But the case is alter'd among us, for the intent of a Christian Magistrate is not to silence all Christian Ministers but some particular men only; so that the Question is not whether Minister or no? but whether this or that Minister of Christ? And doubtless every Christian Prince has Power to chuse what Men he thinks fittest for publick Offices in Church or State, so long as they be equally qualified according to God's Law.

But to go on, The Opinion and Practice of the *Dissenters* in the late unhappy Times,
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are not yet forgotten, they were all then of an opinion that Christ's Ministers may be silenc'd and accordingly put it in practice every Party as it serv'd their turn: See their *Solemn League and Covenant*, all who would not enter into it, and solemnly swear to doe their utmost endeavour to abolish Episcopacy and set up Presbytery, were immediately not only silenc'd but sequester'd; though their Ministry was as much of Divine Right as any of theirs now. Conscience then was no Plea for not taking this solemn Oath. They would not suffer one of the old Clergy to teach a School. Nay, they would not allow their own *Independent* Brethren to preach, though they had all taken *Presbyterian* Orders, as they themselves. See the Letter from the *Presbyterian* Ministers of *London*, to the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*, *Ann.* 1645. *Jan.* 1. And the grand Debate, &c. And in *New-England* where the *Independents* have the Power they are all of the same Mind, none is to preach publicly, by their Laws, where any two organick Churches, Council of State, or general Court, shall declare their dissatisfaction thereat. See their Body of Statutes which they have lately printed. Nay, they are not satisfied to silence such Ministers as will not conform, but they banish them too,

too, as they did Mr. *Williams* and others.

And is it not very strange then that the silencing of such Ministers by the King and Governours of the Church, who positively refuse to submit to the Orders of the Church, or to give their Governours such a Test of their Obedience and Conformity to the Laws of the Church and State, as they in their Discretion have thought fit to require of them ; that this should be a thing so unlawful and wicked now, that has been practised in the purest Ages of the Church, and by the Dissenters themselves when they were in Power, and by all the Churches in the World at this day.

And indeed if the Tests which the Laws require of their Obedience and Loyalty be too severe and rigid, they may blame themselves for it ; for Governours cannot be too cautious in securing the Peace and Safety of the Kingdom against a Faction that has once already overthrown this Monarchy, and Church. And give us all the Reason in the World to believe, That they are ready to do the same again (especially the latter) as soon as ever it is in their Power. The bitter Spirit they show in *Scotland* already, and their Unchristian like behaviour to all those that differ from them in Opinion,

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shews us plainly what we may expect here when ever they are able.

And thus much for the Pleas which the Dissenters use for Separation, which relate to the Constitution of our Church. The second sort are against the terms of Communion with it. They say our terms of Communion are unlawful, for that the Church of *England* enjoins some things in God's Worship which are not expressly commanded in Scripture, and so makes the Scriptures insufficient. And these things are our Ceremonies, and prescribed Forms of Prayer, &c.

First, as to our Ceremonies. The Church of *England* uses no Ceremonies, but such as were us'd in the purest Ages of the Church, as Dr. *Stillingfleet* has prov'd in his *Mischiefs of Separation*: And such as are now us'd by the greatest part of the Reform'd Churches beyond Seas. The *Lutheran* Churches have the same, and more Ceremonies than we have: And yet these Churches have been thought fit to be united to the best Reform'd Churches by the best and wisest Protestants, as appears by a Synod of the Reform'd Churches at *Charenton* in *France*, Anno 1631.

And indeed, there is no Christian Church in the World, but what do make Laws, and Canons in Matters of Circumstance, and com-

compel both Ministers and People to obey the same. They do not believe that every variation in Circumstance, in God's Worship is setting up new parts of Worship as our Dissenters seem to do when they charge us with setting up new parts of Worship, and making the Scriptures insufficient. Adoration, we all agree, is a substantial and proper act of Divine Worship, but whether this Adoration is perform'd by prostration, or by bowing, or by kneeling, is a Circumstance in it self indifferent; And therefore they who differ in these Circumstances, do not differ in the act of Worship, but in the manner. See the *Harmony of Confessions*, where you will find what the Opinions of other Reformed Churches are concerning the Lawfulness and Usefulness of Ceremonies: The latter *Helvetic* Confession saith, *That there are different Rites and Ceremonies found in the Churches; let no Man judge hereby that the Churches dissent.* And the Confession of *Bohemia* hath, *Wherefore those Rites and those good Ceremonies ought only to be kept, which among the People of Christ do Edifie; therefore whether they be extant, or brought in by the Bishops; or by the Councils Ecclesiastical, or by other Authors whatsoever, the simpler*

sort are not to trouble themselves about that, but must use them to that which is good. And a little after, *Although our Men do not equally observe all Ceremonies with other Churches, which is not a thing necessary to be done, yet are they not so minded as to move any Dissentions for the cause of Ceremonies, although they be not judged to be altogether necessary, so that they be not found contrary to God's Word.* And the *Augustine Confession* has; *Some Men then may ask, whether we would have this life of Man to be without Order, without Ceremonies? In no wise: But we teach, That the true Pastors in their Churches may Ordain Publick Rites or Ceremonies.* And *Beza* in his 24th. *Epist.* agrees herein, as has been said before. And *Calvin* in his *Book of the True way of Reformation*, Ch. 16. says, *He would not contend about Ceremonies, not only those which are for decency, but those which are Symbolical. Let all things be done decently and in order, says the Scripture.* And *St. Paul* tell us, *1 Cor. 14. 33. God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints.*

But to come home to our Dissenters, *Mr. Baxter* in his *Poor Man's Family Book*, p. 337. speaking of our publick Worship in
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our Parish Churches, says, *In all the lawful Orders, Gestures, and Manners of behaviour in God's Worship, affect not to differ from the rest, but conform your self to the use of the Church, for in the Church singularity is a Discord, &c.* See *Vines* on the Sacrament to the same purpose, p. 39. and many more Instances of this kind might be given, but what has been said is sufficient to shew that such Ceremonies as serve for Order, or Edification, and are not directly contrary to God's Law; are to be used according to the Opinion of all the Reformed Churches, and most Eminent Men both at home and abroad.

Now, How shall we know what Ceremonies are lawful, and what not? It is to be noted, That the nature of Ceremonies is to be taken from the Doctrine which goes along with it, and may be lawful and not lawful, as that is. If a Ceremony be made a substantial part of God's Worship, and unalterable; or be suppos'd so necessary, as that the doing of it would be a thing meritorious or pleasing to God, and the not doing of it sinful, tho' there were no human Law which requir'd the doing of it; Then it becomes sinful, because it makes the Scriptures insufficient. And this it was that

made the Jewish Ceremony of washing before Meat sinful: And so it is in many of the Ceremonies of the Church of *Rome*. But when Ceremonies are injoin'd for the sake of Order and Uniformity in God's Worship, according to the general Rules of the Scripture, and to prevent the great Mischiefs which we should inevitably fall into, if every Pastor and People were suffered to follow their several different judgments in the manner of God's Worship, then they are lawful and good.

But, say they, If these Ceremonies do not bind the Consciences of Men, Why does the Discipline and Censures of the Church, force Men to use them? I answer, The Church does not oblige Men to the observance of these Ceremonies, as things that bind the Conscience, or which are necessary to be done or not done in themselves; but the Reason why Men are forced to observe them, and punish'd if they refuse, is because they are appointed by the Church, and disobedience to the Laws of Church or State, made not contrary to the Law of God, is sinful, *Rom. 13. 5.* and 2. And for this they are punish'd, and also for disturbing the publick Peace. And thus we justify our bowing at the name of *Jesus* at seasonable times,

times, and all our Ceremonies; since the Church has appointed them, we ought to obey, unless we can prove them to be sinful, which no Man can do, so long as the Worship is directed to a true Object, to wit, the Person of Christ. As for the Ceremony of Bowing towards the Altar, Note the Canon that appointed it, did not oblige any to the observance of it, but left them to their liberty.

As to the posture appointed by the Church of *England*, for receiving the Lord's Supper, to wit, Kneeling, 'Tis a Circumstance which may be varied according to the Discretion of the Church. In the Primitive Church it was always taken in the posture of Adoration, which posture varied according to the Customs of Countries. Now Kneeling being the posture of Adoration in these Kingdoms, the Church of *England* has therefore appointed, that it be taken kneeling. And indeed, 'tis but very reasonable that so Sacred an Ordinance, and so great a Benefit, should be received in the most thankful and humble posture that may be, and that surely is on our Knees; which is also the fittest posture for those high strains of Devotion, with which so Sacred a Work ought to be attended at the very instant of taking it.

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against this posture of Kneeling at the Sacrament, is because it is Idolatrous and contrary to Christ's own Practice. 'Tis strange that they will make us and the greatest part of the Reform'd Churches all Idolaters whether we will or no: Does not our Book of *Common Prayer* at the end of the Communion Service tell them as plain as words can express it, That we pay no Adoration to any thing in the Sacrament, but Christ himself which is in Heaven, and yet will they make us Idolaters for all this? Has any of them ever writ so strong against Idolizing the Elements of Bread and Wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as our Divines of the Church of *England* have done? And yet will they perswade us we are Idolaters? They may as well believe, that we Worship the Stones in the Church-Walls, when we kneel down to Pray in them: And truly, I fear many of them do so; which makes them use that posture so seldom in their publick Meetings: For you shall seldom see in any of their Meetings, scarce one of the whole Congregation on their Knees, not even at repeating the Lord's Prayer, if it happen to be said, which is not often. Their usual postures of Praying in their publick Congregations, are either standing,

ing, or lolling on their Elbows : And at the Reading of the Holy Scriptures ; nay, even of the Psalms themselves, tho' they are the very highest strains of Devotion, you shall see them all sitting on their Breeches, and many of them with their Hats on.

But pray, How comes the posture of sitting to be the only fit posture for receiving the Lord's Supper ? Was that the posture Christ us'd ? No, if we will believe most learned Men, they will tell us, Christ gave it leaning ; which perhaps, he might have done on purpose, to let us see, that he did not require any one set posture, for leaning is a mean as it were, between kneeling and standing, and seems to incline equally to both. Why do they not take it leaning as Christ did, and after Supper, and in an upper Room ? Why do they not observe all these Circumstances ? If one may be dispens'd with without sin, Why not another ? If they will not be so civil as to Conform to the Church of *England*, Why will they not follow the Example of other Reformed Churches ? the Churches of *France* and most of the Reformed Churches, take it either standing or kneeling, as being postures of Adoration : But because they do, our *English* Dissenters will take it in no other posture,

posture, but that which is most irreverent, and farthest from Adoration in the World; to wit, sitting on their Breeches. 'Tis a Feast (say they) and therefore sitting being a posture of ease, is most suitable to it: We own 'tis a Feast, but not a common, but Spiritual Feast; and therefore we ought to take it not in the posture we use at our common Tables, but in a more decent and reverent Posture.

To conclude this Point, I shall give you the words of one of the most Eminent of the Non-conformist Preachers in this Matter. *Vines*, in his Book on the Sacrament, p. 39. says, *'Tis no corruption to vary in occasional Circumstances in administering the Lord's Supper; such as time and place, and posture, &c.* Mr. Baxter has several times declar'd the same, and so has most of the Non-conformist Ministers. And herewith agrees *Hooker* in his *Eccles. Polity*, lib. 5. p. 366.

As to the Sign of the Cross in Baptism, 'Tis us'd only as a Solemn Rite or Ceremony of admission into the Church of *England*, as 'tis usual in admissions into Societies to use some particular Ceremonies: Therefore as Baptism, besides its Sacramental Efficacy, is a Rite of admission into Christ's Catholick Church, so the Sign of the Cross, is into our Church of *England*. We do not use

use it as 'tis used in the Church of *Rome*; for they use it as a dedicative Sign to God, we only as a Token, or declarative Sign to Men; they use it before Baptism, and make it part of it; we after, and make it no part of Baptism, but allow the Baptism to be good without it; and it to be omitted in Private Baptism, if it be scrupled.

If it be said, that since these Ceremonies are allowed to be things indifferent in themselves by the Church of *England*, and are scrupled by the Dissenters, why will the Church of *England* impose them? I answer, First, 'tis not fit nor convenient that such things as are thought necessary by the Governours of a Church, to preserve the Order and Unity of it, should be cast aside, to humour some over scrupulous and restless Minds, and who, 'tis like, would not be satisfied, were that granted. Secondly, It is more safe for the Church of *England* to follow the Example of the greatest part of the Reformed Churches, which do allow and practise them, than such a handful of People as the *Dissenters* of *England*, &c. And Thirdly, There were as insignificant Ceremonies enjoyn'd by the Apostles themselves, as any of ours are now, notwithstanding some Men's scruples concerning them; as
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the *Love Feasts*, and *Holy Kiss*, &c. till abolish'd by general consent. And the Assembly of their own Divines at *Westminster*, tell us, *The Apostles* (say they) *notwithstanding the difference of Men's Judgments, did prescribe Rules of Uniformity.* See *Papers for Accomodation*, p. III.

The next great Objection which the *Dis-senters* make to the terms of our Communion is, For that we tie up our Ministers to prescribed Forms of Prayer, which is a flinting of the Spirit, and hinders them from exercising their Gifts, and is contrary to Scripture, and the practice of the Primitive Church.

The Arguments which they commonly use against written Forms of Prayer are, First, They say that nothing but the Canonical Scripture, and the lively Voice of God's Graces (which they call Preaching and Extempore Prayer) are to be brought into the Publick Worship of God; and nothing that is Humane, because subject to Infirmities and Errors. But if so, then must we exclude not only all written Prayers, but the whole Bible too, unless in the Original Tongue; for all Translations of it are Humane, and subject to Errors. And also the Prayers and Preaching of the Pastors must

must be excluded, for the Errors in the Sermons ; and Prayers of the Pastors, cannot be said to be the lively Voices of God's own Graces. And the Psalms in Metre must be also excluded.

Another Argument is, That we must not make use of any outward helps in the action of Prayer; for the Spirit they say helpeth our Infirmities, and therefore written Forms, and all other outward helps are sinful. But let me ask them, whether the Voice of another that Prayeth, or Fasting, or the lifting up of the Hands and Eyes, *1 Tim. 2. 8.* or Kneeling, be Prayer it self, or only outward helps to Prayer to make it more fervent? Sure they are outward helps only; and yet they are used in the very action of Prayer.

Again, they say Reading a Prayer cannot be Praying; for Prayer is the pouring forth Supplications to God, the other a receiving in of such things as we Read. But when one hears a Prayer pronounced by another, his hearing does receive it into his Soul; but yet at the same instant he doth power it forth as a Prayer to God. Why then may not this be done as well when 'tis read as when 'tis pronounced by another?

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But then they tell us, That all Forms of Prayer are a stinting of the Spirit. If so, Why will they hear the Extempore Prayer of another Man? is not this as much a Form of Prayer to all the Hearers, as any written Form can be? Doubtless it is. How comes it then, that the Spirit of the Hearers is not as much stinted when they joyn in this Form, as if they had joyn'd in a written Form?

But since our *Dissenters* have the confidence to affirm, That Forms of Prayer are sinful; and were never used among Christians till lately, in the time of Popery and Superstition, and are supported only by the Ignorance and Lazyness of our Clergy, I will shew, That Forms of Prayer and Praises have been used by God's People in the time of the *Old Testament*, and have been practised and recommended by Christ himself in the *New*: And that both Forms of Prayer and Liturgies, were Compos'd by the Fathers, and appointed to be used in the Church ever since Christ's days: And that even the most Eminent of our own *Non-Conformists* have heretofore declared their liking thereto: And that all the Reformed Churches do use and approve of prescribed Forms in their publick Worship at this Day: And lastly, I will shew, That our *English Common*

Common-Prayer Book has been particularly Commended and Approved by the most Learned and Eminent Men of the Reformed Churches beyond Seas. And when this is done, if any will be so hardy, as to affirm, That Forms of Prayer are so Sinful, as to cause a necessity of Separation, he is incorrigible, and not to be Convinced by Reasons.

First then, Forms of Prayer, &c. were used by God's People in the time of the *Old Testament*; for the Lord prescribed a Form of Blessing to *Aaron*, saying, *On this wise ye shall bless the Children of Israel, saying, &c. Numb. vi. 23.* And again, *Deut. xxvi.* he prescribed a Form of Prayer, which he commanded the People to use. And the *xxij. Psalm* is a Prayer, which the People were commanded to sing or say, every Morning; so are several of the other *Psalms* Forms of Prayers, as *lxxxvi, xc, cij, &c.* See *Origen Cint. Cels. l. 4. p. 178.* And here observe, That the *Dissenters* will allow these *Psalms* to be Prayers, and that they ought to be Sung to God; yet they will not allow that a Man should Pray Singing. For, say they, When they are Sung, they are not Prayer. See now what an absurdity they will run into, rather than forsake their own
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Opinion: For here they affirm, That a Man may say the Words of Prayer to God devoutly, and yet not pray.

Secondly, Christ himself used a Form of Prayer (though doubtless he had a power of praying Extempore, much beyond what our Dissenters, or any that ever was on Earth, can pretend to) when he was in the Garden, a little before his Suffering, he prayed twice or thrice in the same Words, *Matth. xxvi. 44. Mark xiv. 39.* and that too at a time when he was in so great Extremity and Sorrow, That he sweated drops of Blood; and at such a time one usually prays after the most prevailing and fervent manner.

And to assure us that our Saviour thought Forms of Prayer very necessary to help our Infirmities, we have not only his Example, but his Precept for it too. For our Saviour taught his Disciples a Form of Prayer, *Matth. vi. 9.* and bid them use it. And the occasion of our Saviour's giving his Disciples this Form of Prayer was to obviate the inconveniencies which he saw did usually attend Extempore Prayers; to wit, the using Vain Repetitions, &c. which he tells them are not pleasing to God; and therefore he first bids them beware of that, and then immediately after he gives them a short and

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perfect Form of Prayer, as the best way to prevent that evil. Whether our Dissenters have not as much reason to use Forms of Prayer for that very reason as Christ's Disciples had, let the World judge that hears their tedious *ex tempore* Prayers fill'd with as many vain Repetitions, and bald, and sometimes senseless Expressions as any of theirs.

But say the Dissenters, When our Saviour taught his Disciples to pray, he did not design that they should use any certain Form of Prayer. For he bad them, *Luke 11. 21* When ye pray, say thus; and (*this*) being an adverb of Similitude, does shew that our Saviour did not intend they should use the same words, but some other such like. To this I answer, In the 3d. chap. of *Exod. v. 14, 15.* The Lord said unto Moses, thus shalt thou say to the Children of Israel, *E H E I E* hath sent me unto you. And again, the God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you. Here Moses (by this Rule) must not say these words, not *E H E I E* hath sent me unto you, not the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you, but the like. And by the same reason the Scripture is not the very Word of God, but the Words of the Prophets; for all along,

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when the Prophet says, *Thus saith the Lord*, they do not tell the very Words of God, but the like.

From what has been said, 'tis evident that we have Scripture on our side, both Old and New Testament, for using prescribed Forms of Prayer. We will in the next place enquire what Authority we have for it in the first and purest Ages of the Church. First then, That Forms of Prayer were us'd in the Church in the first Century, I gather from *Ignatius* who was Bishop of *Antioch*, *Ann. Dom. 99.* in his *Epist.* to those at *Magnesia*, he bids 'em, *Do nothing without the Bishop and Presbyters, nor to make tryal of things agreeable to their own private Fancy*, p. 34. And *Socrates* in his *History*, l. 6. c. 8. says, *That Ignatius first brought the usage of singing alternately (as we use in our Choirs) into the Church of Antioch.* *Photius* affirms the same of him. And *Theodoret* says, *Hist. lib. 2. c. 24.* *That this Custom of singing alternately, began at Antioch, and was soon received all the World over.*

In the second Century, *Tertull.* *de Orat. c. 1. and c. 9.* tells us, They us'd Forms of Prayer then in the *African Church*. He calls the Lord's Prayer, *the lawful and ordinary Prayer*, and that the Christians daily repeated

peated that very Form. And he shews they sang Hymns, &c. then in the Church alternately as we do now, *Tertull. ad Uxor. l. 2. p. 172.*

And *Calvin* in his *Instit. l. 4. c. 1.* affirms the same, That the Christians did use to repeat the Lord's Prayer daily, and that they did it by Christ's Command. How will our Dissenters reconcile this to their seldom or never using of it, even on the Lord's Day; every young Preacher, yea, and every perhaps drunken Cobler, preferring their own rash and indeliberate Prayers before it.

In the third Century, *St. Cyprian* who lived then, affirms the same, that the Lord's Prayer was us'd daily, for says he, *The Father will know the words of his own Son*, see *Cypr. de Orat. Dom. p. 309.* And the same *Cyprian* in his *Ep. 8. ad Cler. & Pleb. p. 24.* says, *Christ commanded us to pray for all men in a common Prayer wherein all agreed.* It appears also that the Priest and People pray'd by way of Responses; as when the Priest said, *Lift up your hearts*, the People answer'd, *We lift them up unto the Lord.* See *Cypr. de Orat. Dom. §. 22.* See more for this interchangeable way of praying between Priest and People, *B. Bils. of Christian Subjection*, part 4. P. 435.

In the same Century, *Origen* says, *They who served God through Jesus in the Christian way, use frequently night and day the in-joined Prayers: See Orig. in Cels. l. 6. p. 302.*

And *St. Basil* in his Book *de Spirit. Sanct. c. 29. p. 221.* tells us, That *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, who was his Predecessor in the Bishoprick of *Neocæsarea* and coteremporary with *St. Cyprian*, composed a Liturgy, and appointed Ceremonies for that Church. And that too in an age when miraculous Gifts lasted.

In the beginning of the fourth Century, *Ann. Dom. 312.* the first Christian Emperor *Constantine* (as *Eusebius* tells us in his *Life of Constantine, lib. 4. c. 17. p. 395.*) order'd his Palace after the manner of a Church, and would take the Books himself into his hands, either for explaining the Holy Scripture, or repeating the prescrib'd Prayers in his Royal Family.

In the same Century, *Athanasius* Bishop of *Alexandria*, shews us, that the Priests and People pray'd by way of Responses in that Church; for in his *Epist. to Solitar. p. 239.* he says, *The People mourned and groaned to God in the Church, all of them crying to the Lord, and saying, Spare thy People, good Lord, spare them, &c.* By which it seems the Church did not think it enough then

then for the People to say, *Amen*, but appointed them distinct and intelligent answers.

In the same Century, the Council of *Laodicea*, *Can. 15. Bev. Tom. 1. p. 459.* appointed Canonical Singers, who sang out of Books, and none but they were allow'd to begin the Hymns. And the same Council, *Can. 18. Bev. Tom. 1. p. 461.* Ordained that the very same Liturgy of Prayers, should be used always both at three in the Afternoon and in the Evening. And now because this Council is so plain evidence against the Dissenters, that they have no way to answer it; they fly again to their last refuge, which is to deny the Authority of this Council; for, they say, this Council of *Laodicea* was but a Provincial Synod, or Council: But tho' we grant 'twas no more but a Provincial Synod, yet I hope a Provincial Council of Orthodox Bishops were Good Authority. But besides, this very Canon concerning Liturgies, was taken into the Code of the universal Church, and confirmed by the Council of *Chalcedon*, which was a general Council.

And that they us'd Forms of Prayer, and Responses, and Alternate way of Singing in the *African Church*, appears by *St. Cyprian* before:

before : And by *Optatus Malevianus*, l. 2. p. 47. for there he blames the *Donatists*, for shutting the mouth of all the People, and forcing them to be silent. See also St. *Augustine de Eccles. Dog. o. 30. Tom. 3. p. 46.* Many more Instances and Authorities may be given to the same purpose as St. *Basil, Ep. 63. p. 843.* and *Ep. 68. p. 856.* (where he says, That a Prayer wherein there are not conjoin'd voices, is not half so strong as otherwise it would be) *Conc. Carthag, Can. 106. Bev. Tom. 1. p. 640.* But I will refer the Reader to Dr. *Comber of Liturgies*, and Dr. *Falkner his Defence of Liturgies.*

Our Dissenters object against our alternate way of praying, as in our Litany, where the Priest says half the Sentence, and the People the rest, for that neither Priest nor People speak a complete Sentence, and therefore our Prayer is imperfect, and we do but mock God. But by what has been said it appears that this praying by way of Responses, was us'd in the purest Ages of the Church, and by the Holiest Men. But pray, Why may not the words make as perfect a Prayer when they are pronounced by two Mouths, as when only by one? Prayer is not the pronouncing of words, but the joining the desire and consent thereto, and this they may

do

do as well when they are pronounced by several Mouths as by one. They may as well say, That when a Tune is play'd by a Consort of Musick, and the Trebles rest and let the Tenors and Bases go on, as sometimes they do, that the Tune is not a compleat and perfect Tune, for if you take either part singly, it is not; but altogether it is too great Advantage.

The Advantage of this way of Praying by Responses is, That we can give our hearty Consent to each Petition, after a more lively manner than by barely saying, *Amen*. And also by our frequent answering of whole Sentences, our Fancies are the more stirr'd up and enliven'd by shaking off that dulness and drowiness, that otherwise would be apt to seize upon our Spirits, in barely listening to one long continued Prayer.

And in the Primitive Church, they had certain Prayers for certain Times and Occasions, as *Easter-Eve, &c.* See *Leo in Vit. Chrysost. Tom. 8. p. 288. &c.*

Thus much for the practice of the Primitive Church. Now let us come a little nearer our own time, and see what the Opinion of other Reformed Churches is concerning prescrib'd Forms of Prayers and Liturgies; and this we do the rather, because the Dissenters

are perpetually calling upon us to reform our selves to the example of other Reform'd Churches. Tho' I think under favour, we of *England* have no more reason to follow the pattern of other Nations as to the Re-forming and Governing of our Church, than we have to do so in Matters of State, since we have as absolute and independent Power of Reforming our selves as any of them; and God be thank'd, as able and godly Ministers both in Church and State to direct us therein. They may as well quarrel with us, because we do not depose our King, and reduce our Government from that of a limited and mixt Monarchy, to a Commonwealth, like that of *Geneva*.

But since they insist so much upon this, I will make it appear that the Church of *England* comes nearer to the judgment and practice of all the Reformed Churches, in using prescribed Forms of Prayer, than the Dissenters do in rejecting them.

I will begin with the *Lutheran* Churches, which I shew'd before, are acknowledged to be true Churches, and which far exceed in number the Churches that follow *Calvin's* method. *Luther* himself compos'd a Form of *Common-Prayer* for the Church of *Wittemburg*, taken out of the Mass Book:

See

See *Luther's Epist. Tom. 2. p. 384.* And all the Churches of his Communion at this day do use a *Liturgy* containing Collects, Epistles, Gospels for every *Sunday*, Prayers and Litanies, together with all other parts of Ecclesiastical Ministration, as our *Common-Prayer Book* does; and which agrees with ours almost *verbatim*, especially in the Litany. And these are impos'd on the Churches, as particularly the Churches of *Denmark*, and the Churches in *Upper Hungary*, which are all *Lutheran*. And the *Lutheran* Churches do chant their publick Prayers as we do in our Cathedrals. And they observe Holy Days. See all this proved at large from their own writers by Dr. *Comber* his *Defence of Liturgies 2d. Part; p. 305, &c.*

Next for the Churches of *Poland*, and *Lithuania* in 2 Synods held there, *Ann. Dom. 1633. and 1634.* one certain Liturgy is injoin'd, to be us'd in all those Dominions. Certain prescrib'd Liturgies are also us'd in *Transylvania, Hungary, Bohemia, &c.* See at large Dr. *Comb. ubi Supra*, and Monsieur *Du-rell* his *View of the Government, and publick Worship of God in the Reformed Churches beyond Seas.* Printed, London, 1662.

Now

Now for the Churches Reform'd by Calvin and others ; as *Geneva, France, Helvetia, Holland, &c.* Calvin compos'd a Form of Divine Service, which is us'd in the Church of *Geneva*, and those of *France* at this day, and their Ministers are bound to use them. And see Calvin's Letter to the Protector of *England*, during the Minority of King *Ed. 6.* the Protector at that time, when the *Common-Prayer Book* was to be settled by Act of Parliament, thought fit first to Advice with so Eminent a Man, as Calvin was, about it. He writes to Calvin to know his Opinion therein ; Calvin returns him this answer, *For so much as concerns the Prayers and Ecclesiastical Rites, I much approve that they be determined ; so that it may not be lawful for the Ministers to vary from it, that it may be a help to the weakness of some ; That it may be a Testimony of the Churches consent ; And that it may put a stop to the levity of such as are for new things.* See *Calv. Ep. p. 165. Ep. 87.* to the Protector. And see his Letter to *Cox*, a Church of *England* Divine upon his Arrival at *Franckford*, among his Epistles, 164, 165.

See *Beza* his *Approbation of Forms of Prayer*, Tom. 2. p. 229.

In the *French Church*, *Mornay* Lord *Du-Plessis*, in his *Book of the Mass*, allows of the Use and Antiquity of prescribed Forms: See at large *Dr. Comber of Liturgies* 2d. Part, p. 313. And see there the famous *Monsieur Daille* agreeing herewith.

In the *Church of Helvetia*, *Bullinger* tells us, they used prescribed Forms, keep Fasts and Holy-Days, &c. *Bulling. Decod. 2. Serm. 1. p. 38.*

The *Churches of Holland* use Forms of Prayer for Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and all occasional Offices, and also Liturgies, &c. which are all put into a *Book of Common-Prayer*. And even in *Scotland* they have had a *Common-Prayer Book*, for there are some of them now extant, which were Printed, *Ann. 1594.* supposed to be writ by *Mr. Knox* for the use of the *Kirk of Scotland*. See the latter end of *Dr. Comber* his *Defence of Liturgies*, 2d. Part.

And the *Leyden Professors* say, That Forms of Prayer are not only lawful, but very advantageous; because every Christian cannot fitly conceive new Prayers: and the attention of Auditors, are not a little help'd in great assemblies by usual Forms. See *Dr. Falkner*, his *Libertas Ecclesiastica*. p. 121.

Thus much for Forms of Prayer in general:

neral: But some perhaps may object against our *Common-Prayer* in particular. To clear that, I think, 'twere sufficient to tell them, that it has been approv'd of by all the learned and godly Divines of the Church of *England* ever since the Reformation, and confirm'd by several Parliaments: And it cannot reasonably be suppos'd that God Almighty shou'd conceal his will from the greatest number of the most learned, pious and judicious People of a Nation, notwithstanding their frequent Prayers to God, that he would direct them, and their great Care and Study which they take to come to the knowledge of the truth; and reveal it only to a few; and those of the rarer injudicious sort, who have had least time, and study, and means to come to greater Knowledge, such as our Dissenters generally are. This alone were sufficient to recommend our particular *Common-Prayer*: But since our Dissenters will not allow so many several Parliaments, and so many Successions of Learned Divines to be competent judges in this matter, we are willing to stand to the judgment of our Neighbour Churches of the Reformed Religion concerning our *Common-Prayer*, and the other Matters in controversy between us.

In

In King *Edward 6th.* his days, Archbishop *Cranmer* did request the famous *Bucer* to peruse the whole Book of *Common-Prayer*, in order to his censuring what he thought was to be amended. *Bucer* accordingly did so; and declares his judgment of it thus: *In the prescript Form for the Communion, and the daily Prayers, I see nothing written in this Book, which is not taken out of the Word of God, if not in expresse words, as the Psalms and Lessons, yet in sence, as the Collects: And also the order of these Lessons and Prayers, and the time when they are to be used, are very agreeable to the Word of God, and the Practice of the ancient Church. See Bucer's Censure upon the Book of Common-Prayer, c. 1. p. 457.* And note this was before the *Common-Prayer* was amended as now it is. Some things 'tis true, *Bucer* did wish to be amended, which has been since done, and most of them according to his Advice there.

Next, the Archbishop of *Spalato* in his Book against *Suarez*, p. 340. says, *That the English Liturgy contains nothing in it, which is not Holy, which is not Pious, and truly Christian as well as Catholick.*

Causabon in his Epistle to King *James* the first, affirms the same; And says farther,

ther, That none at this day comes nearer the Form of the Ancient Church, following a middle way between those who have offended both in excess and defect.

The next Authority for us is the learned Grotius, who 'tis certain had no Obligation to the Church of England, but rather the contrary. He says, I am sure the English Liturgy, the Rite of laying on of Hands on Children in memory of Baptism, the Authority of Bishops, of Synods consisting of none but the Clergy, &c. do sufficiently agree to the Orders of the Ancient Church; from which we cannot deny but we have departed both in France and Holland. See Grotius ad Boetlaer, Ep. 62. p. 21.

The next is the famous Lud. Capellus, who was a famous French Divine of the Reformed Church, and Divinity Professor in a famous Protestant University. This Man lived to hear of our Independent Sect in England, and writ most Learnedly against 'em. Says he, When miraculous Gifts ceased, there was a necessity for Liturgies, which were used in the First IV. Ages uncorrupted; but afterwards Corruptions were introduced by the following Popes. But upon the Reformation the Liturgy was purged from all its Corruptions, and has been happily used in the several Re-
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form'd Churches, and with good success; until very lately (says he) there arose a sort of morose, scrupulous, (not to say downright superstitious) Men, who for many trifling Reasons, of no moment, not only dislike the Liturgy hitherto used in that Church, but would have both it, and the whole Order of Bishops to be utterly abolished; in place whereof they would substitute that, which they call their Directory, &c. and so goes on. And then he proves at large, That Forms of Prayer, are not only necessary for the unlearned, but the learned also; and shews the insufficiency of their Directory. And how ridiculous it is to suppose, That we have that extraordinary Gift of Prayer, that they had in the Apostles days, and some little time after. 'Twere too long to put it all down here, I will refer you to Dr. Comber's *Defence of Liturgies*, II. Part, pag. 325. and will go on to shew the Opinion of some of the most Eminent of our own Dissenters concerning our Common-Prayer.

Mr. Baxter in his *Poor Man's Family Book*, pag. 336. says, *Do not peevishly pick quarrels with the Prayers of the Church, nor come to them with humourfome prejudice, &c.* And in his Preface to the same Book, he says, he mightily approves of Forms of Prayer.

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See

See Dr. Owen to the same purpose, his *Evangelical Love*, pag. 54.

And Mr. Baxter in his *Dispute of Liturgies*, Prop. 10. says farther, *That the constant disuse of Forms is apt to breed a giddiness in Religion, and may make Men Hypocrites, who delude themselves with conceits, that they delight in God, when 'tis but in those Novelties and variety of Expressions that they are delighted.* See also Gifford, a Non-Conformist, his Answer to *Greenwood*; he writ a whole Treatise, proving the lawfulness of read Prayer.

And now I have shew'd, that Praying by Forms has been used by the Saints in the *Old Testament*, enjoyned by Christ in the *New*, practised by all the Holy Fathers and Devout Christians who lived ever since the first settling of the Church; and is now allowed and practised in all the regular Protestant Churches, and approved by some of the most Eminent of our own Dissenters. Let any Man now in his right Reason judge, whether praying by Forms be so wicked, and abominable a thing as most of our Dissenters make it. One of the Non-Conformist Ministers, in a Book which he Publish'd not many Years since, speaking of Forms of Prayer, calls it, *That pitiful contemptible thing, called Uniformity in Words,*
and

and Syllables, and Phrases; which was never desired of God, nor ever entered into his or his Son's heart. Let the World judge now, whether using Forms of Prayer, &c. be this pitiful, contemptible thing they are pleased to make it, or the Books that contain them deserve no better usage from Christians, than to be burnt in the Streets by the Common Hangman. In the days of *Julian* there was never any thing done more wicked, than to burn the Holy Bible: But even to that height are those who call themselves Christians arrived already, in our Neighbouring Kingdom: if these things be suffered, what must we think will follow.

But the main Text of Scripture, which our Dissenters rely on, for to defend their Extempore Prayers is, *Rom. viij. 26.* where *St. Paul* says, *The Spirit helpeth your Infirmities*; and therefore they conclude, they ought to use no outward helps. But I have shew'd before, That outward helps are to be used, as Kneeling, lifting up the Hands and Eyes, &c. So that 'tis plain they mistake this Text of Scripture. And 'tis evident they do so, for that all the Fathers, and the most Eminent Men of the Church, as *Calvin*, *Luther*, &c. whenever they recommended the use of Liturgies, they gave this Reason for

it among others, To prevent the inconveniences which some Mens folly would betray them to in their using rash and unpremeditated Prayers: Now if the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities in the sence that our Dissenters will have it : How come all these learned Men ; yea, and Mr. *Baxter* himself, &c. to recommend Forms as necessary for the helping of our Infirmities, and so make the Holy Spirit insufficient ? Shall we believe that all these learned Men did not understand the meaning of that Text so well as some of our Dissenters do ? 'Tis very likely that St. *Augustine* and St. *Chrysostom* (who liv'd nearer the Apostles days by above Twelve Hundred Years, than any of our Non-conformists) might have understood the Apostles meaning, better than any of them : Now let us hear what their sence was of these words of St. *Paul*, *We know not what to pray for, as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities.* St. *Augustine* *ad Prob. Ep.* 121. p. 129. will not grant that any Christians wanted the Spirit to help them with words and expressions : For he says, It is not credible that the Apostle or they to whom he wrote were ignorant of the Lord's Prayer. And therefore they must necessarily have known what to have pray'd

pyra'd for ; therefore these words, (*The Spirit helpeth our Infirmities*) he tells us must be expounded, of the Spirit's giving us patience not to pray absolutely to be delivered out of our afflictions, but in God's due time. And St. Chrysostom in his *Hom.* 14. in 8. *Rom. p.* 120. says, *That there was a miraculous gift of Prayer in the Apostles days ; to which St. Paul alluded in those words (The Spirit helpeth our Infirmities.)* But he tells us there, that 'twas ceas'd long since, that is, before his days, tho' he liv'd in the fourth Century ; so that whatever the Apostles meaning was then, it can no ways be taken in the sence our Dissenters would have it, nor does it condemn prescribed Forms, now that that miraculous gift of Prayer is ceased.

But were there no other Argument against the use of *extempore* Prayers in publick Assemblies, than the inconveniency of them, 'twere sufficient to reject them : 'Tis impossible that Order or Unity can be preserv'd in any Church, where every Congregation hath liberty to Worship God in a different way from all the rest ; one Minister praying for one thing, and another perhaps for the quite contrary at the same time, according to their different judgments

and interests, as was usual in the late times, when that *extempore* way was us'd. Besides, in great Congregations, 'tis impossible that all the People should keep their attention so well fixt on an *extempore* Prayer to which they are utter strangers, as on a Prayer to which they have been accusom'd: For how can they join with the Minister in every Petition as they ought to do, till they have reflected a little upon what it was he said, for when the Minister is left to his own Fancy in his Prayer, 'tis very like he may either through mistake or wilfully come out with some Petition that all his hearers cannot join with him in: So that 'tis necessary for every one of the Congregation to watch every expression, and reflect a little on it, before he consent to it. In the mean time, the eloquent Pastor to shew his extraordinary Gift of Prayer, runs away with the business, as if his *Tongue* was indeed *the Pen of a ready writer*. Thus the poor People must either be left behind, or join with him at random.

Another inconveniency which attends *extempore* Prayer, is, That 'tis impossible for a Man who trusts to his own Memory, to retain all his wants, and the wants and necessities of the People so in his Mind, but that

that something or other, will very oft be forgotten, which may be avoided by using of a well compos'd Form.

But again, Can we reasonably imagine that God Almighty can be pleas'd with vain repetitions, and with bald, and unproper, and (too often) nonsensical expressions such as usually attend their *extempore* Prayers? Doubtless he cannot; for where he has given Judgment, and Wit, and Eloquence, he expects it should be us'd in his Service, as well as in our worldly business. Our Saviour bids us, *When we pray, not to use vain repetitions, nor think to be heard for our much speaking*, Matth. 6. 7. And Solomon, Eccles. 5. 1, 2. says, *Keep thy feet when thou goest to the house of the Lord; and be not rash with thy mouth and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven and thou on Earth, therefore let thy words be few*. How agreeable now this Doctrine is to the practice of the Dissenters, in their rash approaching to God with a long inconsiderate Prayer, let any Man judge. When they made their Addresses to the late King *James*; they drew it up with all the caution and premeditation imaginable, and every Sentence was carefully considered on by

several of the best Heads among them, but they address the great King of Heaven, with the rash and inconsiderate expressions of one Person, and he perhaps, a weak one too.

But some of them say, Why should not Ministers be tied to a Form of Preaching, as well as of Praying? Why sure, there is a great deal of difference between Preaching and Praying: Preaching is directed to a Congregation, which is made up of several People, who have different Capacities and Apprehensions, and therefore require different Phrases and Arguments to move them. Some are drawn with one Argument, some with another, some apprehend a Man's meaning by one Expression, some by another, according as they are suited to their several Capacities; so that 'tis impossible to frame a Form in Preaching, to answer all these ends. But Prayers are directed to one God, who is always the same, and not to be pleased with variety of Phrases.

I shall conclude this Point with this observation, That those who are most inveterate against Praying by Forms, do daily use the same individual Form themselves, word for word, throughout the whole year, as any one that frequent their publick or private Meetings, may observe.

The

The Third sort of Pleas which the Dissenters use for Separation, are such as relate to their Consciences : For, say they, What tho' the Terms of Communion with the Church of *England* be lawful, since we cannot satisfy our Consciences, that they are so? We must not act against our Consciences, for that were sin in us. For *St. Paul* says, *Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind*, Rom. 14.

But I answer first, this Scripture is meant of indifferent things, and no other as appears by the coherence of the words with the whole Chapter: For the Apostle is there speaking of *Meats, Times, Days, &c.* and blames the *Romans* for condemning, and quarrelling with one another about them.

But Secondly, 'Tis plain that * *Scruples of Conscience* will not excuse from sin, in some Cases. For 'tis agreed by all, that Conscience will not excuse from sin, unless all proper helps and means are us'd to inform our Judg-

* Note when we refuse any thing injoin'd by Authority, we must be certain that the thing injoin'd is unlawful; for a doubting Conscience will not excuse our disobedience. A doubting Conscience, is when the Conscience is in such a perfect equilibrium or suspense, as that there appears no more reason on the one side of the question, than on the other;

in such case the command of Authority turns the Scales, and makes it necessary for us to obey, since for ought we know, the thing may be as well lawful as not.

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as well justify their Separation from the Presbyterians and Independents, as they can do theirs from the Church of *England*. And by the same Rule, we may subdivide, till there be as many Religions as Men.

I grant that the Obligations of Conscience are the greatest that can be, and to act against the clear Dictates of a Man's Conscience, is a very great sin; but this must be meant of a Conscience when all due care and diligence has been us'd to rectify and inform it. And then what is this to the case of our Dissenters? Do they separate from the Church out of pure Conscience? *yes*, say they, *doubtless we do*: But have they us'd all proper means to inform their judgments, and come to the knowledge of the truth? Surely they will not say they have. Are not the greatest part of the Dissenters a poor illiterate sort of People, who know nothing of the Controversie between us, nor ever trouble their heads about it; but will go to the Meetings, because their Fathers and Mothers did so before them, and will rail at the Church, tho' ask them what is amiss in it seriously, and they cannot tell you. And as for those few of the better sort among them, who perhaps, have had greater advantages of Education, is it not
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Debate and serious Deliberation ; their setting up separate Meetings, and forsaking the Church upon the account of some Scruples which they pretend they cannot conquer, is Sinful and Schismatical.

And when the Assembly of Divines was pressed farther by their Dissenting Brethren, they desired them to answer in this one thing, *Whether some must be denied the liberty of their Conscience in matters of practice or none ? If none, then (say they) we must Renounce our Covenant, and let in Prelacy again, and all other ways : If a denial of Liberty to some may be just, then Uniformity may be settled notwithstanding Men's different Judgments or pretence of Conscience, Papers for Accommodation, pag. 116.*

Agreeable hereto is the practice of the *Independents* themselves, where they have the power ; as in *New-England*, no Separation is there allow'd upon the account of Scruples of Conscience, as appears by their Book of Statutes which they have lately Printed ; and by their telling Mr. *Williams*, a famous Minister among them, that if nothing will serve him but Separation, because he could not conquer his Scruples, The World was wide enough ; and so away they banish'd them in the midst of Winter.

From

From what has been said it appears, That though there were some things amiss in the Church of *England*, which our Dissenters could not satisfy their Consciences about, yet this would not justify Separation from the Church, though perhaps it might (after due pains taken to inform themselves aright concerning them) justify their non-Communion in the things scrupled. Now I will shew that there is really no cause to forsake the Church of *England* upon the account of Conscience ; And that all those who do forsake the Church, and frequent separate Meetings, are condemn'd for Schismatics by the most Eminent Divines of all the Reformed Churches beyond Seas, and by Mr. *Baxter*, Dr. *Owen*, Mr. *Gifford*, *Corbet*, and many other of the Non-Conformists themselves heretofore.

For, First, they all agree, That no Man is obliged in Conscience to separate from any Church that is sound in Doctrine, and has the Sacraments rightly and duly administer'd. The Scripture allows Separation only in these three cases ; *First*, In case of Idolatrous Worship. *Secondly*, In case of False Doctrine imposed instead of True. And, *Thirdly*, In case things indifferent be made necessary to Salvation. But where these

these Three are wanting, nothing will justify Separation. See Canon *Nicen.* 6, 15, 16. *Constant.* c. 6. *Chalced.* 17, 20, 26. *Antioch.* c. 2, 5. *Cod. Eccles. Afr.* c. 53, 55. *Conc. Gangra.* c. 6. *Conc. Carth.* c. 10, 11. *Cod. Can. Eccles. Univ. Can.* 65. All these Canons and many more do condemn Separation from a Church that is sound in Doctrine, and has the Sacraments rightly and duly Administred. So does *Calvin* in his *Inst. lib.* 4. c. 1. *numb.* 9. where he says, That great allowances ought to be made to such Churches, by the Example of the Apostolical Churches. And, *ibid.* *Sect.* 10. he says, That *the Lord esteem'd him a runnagade, and forsaker of Religion, whosoever he be, that separated forwardly from any Christian Society, which imbraceth but the true Ministry of the Word and Sacraments.* And, *ibid.* *Sect.* 12. he says, That *though something that is faulty may creep in, either in the Administration of the Word or of the Sacraments, yet we ought not to separate us from the Communion of that Church; For,* says he, *there are principles of Religion, without which we cannot be saved; and there are other points in which Men may differ, and yet the Unity of the Faith be kept.* And, *ibid.* *Sect.* 13. he says, *It is not for every private Man to separate from the Communion of a Church,*
though

tho' faulty in some things, &c. Beza in his *Epist.* 24. p. 148. agrees herein, so does Monsieur *Daille*, and several other of the Foreign Divines: See Dr. *Still. Misch. of Separ.* 23. and 97. so does the Assembly of Divines, as I have just now shewn, and Papers for *Accommodation*, p. 52. they declare farther, 'That they look upon Separation from a true Church, tho' somethings may be amiss in it, not as a sin of mere humane Infirmary, but as a wilful and dangerous sin. And Mr. Baxter in his *Poor Man's Family Book*, p. 347. tells us, *Many Churches were blam'd in Scripture, but none are requir'd to Separate from them.* See the Answer to Dr. *Stillingsfleet's* Sermon by several Non-conformists, where they all acknowledge our Worship in the nature of it, to be intrinsically good, and a total Separation from it sinful, *ibid.* p. 31. So then it seems so long as a Church retains the Marks and Signs of a true Church, tho' there be many things amiss in such a Church, Separation from it is sinful.

But what if open sinners be admitted to the Communion before they have made publick Confession of their Faults, as is too frequent in the Church of *England*, must I be obliged to communicate with such? May I not Separate in such case? The Apostle,

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1 Cor. 5. 11, 12, 13. bids us, *If any that is call'd a brother be a Fornicator, an Idolater, or Covetous, &c. with such see that ye eat not.* I answer, That this very reason did the *Donatists* in *St. Augustine's* days give (among others) for their Separation, and quoted the same Texts of Scripture, but they were condemn'd for Schismatics as I shew'd before. And *St. Augustine* and all the Catholick Bishops did then agree that these Texts were meant only of Separation in heart, not in body. And therefore they say, *When such a multitude offends as that the casting of them out, would be in danger to cause a Schism, there they ought to be tolerated, least while ye go about to pull up the tares, ye pull up the wheat also, therefore let them both grow together (say they) till the harvest.* But when only a few are guilty of scandalous sins, there they say, *Let not the severity of Discipline cease; but it must not be so severe as to root up, but to amend.* See *Aug. lib. 3. against Permenian a Donatist Bishop, ch. 3. lib. 2. c. 18.*

And herewith agrees *Calv. lib. 4. Instit. c. 1. sect. 13.* where he says, *That tho' sinners be admitted to Communion, we ought to keep our selves from their fellowship, but not to Separate from the Church.* Mr. Baxter
says

says the same in his *Poor Man's Family Book*, p. 347. and *Vines, on the Sacrament*, p. 39.

But suppose the Parson of the Parish be weak, or a Man of a loose Conversation, and I can hear a better Preacher elsewhere, and a Man of a more exemplary Holy Life, and Conversation, May not I go to that Church or Meeting where I find most Edification? No, For this still makes way for Schisms and Divisions in the Church, and therefore was never allow'd in any regular Church, provided the Parson of the Parish be tolerable. The Followers of *Eustathius Sebastenus*, who separated upon this account in *Paphlagonia*, were condemned of Schism by the Council at *Gangra.*; and see *Calvin's Instit.* lib. 4. c. 1. sect. 13. to the same purpose.

And indeed, it is not reasonable that so ignorant and proud, unpeaceable sort of People, as Mr. *Baxter* himself in his *Sacraleg. Disert.* p. 102. &c. confesses the ordinary sort of zealous Professors of Religion to be, shou'd be at liberty to rend and tear a Church to pieces, out of a conceit of a purer way of Worship, as if they knew what was better for their Edification, than the Wisdom of the whole Nation in Parliament, and the Governors of the Church do. The pretence of greater Edification was ne-

ver allow'd by the Dissenters themselves heretofore, as a sufficient cause for Separation, as appears by the *Papers for Accommodation*, and the *Grand Debate*, both Printed when the Assembly of Divines sat at *Westminster*. Nor did Mr. *Baxter* ever allow of this to be a sufficient cause for Separation, as appears by his *Cure of Divisions*, p. 393. where he sets forth the pernicious Consequences of complying with the ungovernable and factious Humours of the ordinary sort of People who are ever apt to revile the best and gravest Ministers, and follow the more conceited, and such as are of most fierce and bitter Spirits. And in his *Poor Man's Family Book*, p. 280. he says, *For want of understanding the right Terms of Church Communion, how woful are our Divisions, you must have Union and Communion in Faith, and Love with all Christians; Let your usual Meeting be with the purest Churches, if you lawfully may, and still respect the publick good; But sometimes occasionally Communicate with defective faulty Churches, so be it, they are true Churches, and put you not upon sin: Think not that your presence makes all the faults of Ministry, Worship, or People to be yours (for then I would join with no Church in the World.) Division is wounding,*
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and tends to Death, abhor it as you love the Churches welfare or your own, &c. And again, *ib.* p. 330. If your Minister (says he) be intolerable through Ignorance, Heresy or Malignity, forsake him utterly; but if he be tolerable, though weak and cold; and if you cannot remove your dwelling, then publick Order, and your Soul's Edification must be joined as well as you can: In London, or other Cities, you may go ordinarily to another Parish Church; but in the Country, and where 'twould be a great offence, you may one part of the day hear in one Parish, and another in the next, if there be a Man much fitter, but notwithstanding, you must communicate with the Church you dwell in. And a little after, he says, I advise you if there be Parish Churches orderly settled under the Magistrates Countenance, whose teachers are sound, tho' an abler Minister should gather a separate Congregation in the same place, out of that and other neighbouring Parishes, and should have stricter Communicants and Discipline, be not too forward to join your self to that separated Church, till you can prove that the hurt that will follow by discord, offence, division, encouraging of Schisms and Pride, &c. is not likely to be greater than your benefit can compensate; but if this separate Church

be a factious Church, set up contentiously against the Concordant Churches, tho' on pretence of greater purity, and if their Meetings be employ'd in contemning and reviling other Churches whose People are not of their mind, and in puffing up themselves with Pride, as if they were the only true Churches of Christ, avoid such separate Churches, as the enemies of Love and Peace. And again, in the same Book, p. 336. he bids us, Not peevishly pick quarrels with the Prayers of the Church, nor come to them with humor some prejudice: think not that you must stay away, or go out of the Church for every passage that is disorderly, unmeet, yea or unsound or untrue; for the words of Prayer are the work of Men, and while all Men are fallible, imperfect and sinful, their Prayers and Preaching will be like themselves, and he that is the highest pretender and the peevishest quarreller hath his own failings, &c.

So that if our Dissenters will allow their own Mr. Baxter to be a competent judge, or any of the other learned Divines before-said, they must own, that neither the weakness of the Ministry, nor better Edification, is a sufficient cause for Separation.

But there is another thing, say they, which makes it necessary for us to separate from
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the Church of England, and that is the Oaths and Subscriptions which they require from us. What says Mr. Baxter to this? Why, Mr. Baxter in his *Poor Man's Family Book*, p. 331. says, *If a Church in other respects sound require of you any false Subscriptions, Promises, or Oaths, or any unlawful thing, you must not do it, but hold Communion in other lawful things.* It seems then he does not allow of Separation upon this account neither.

The Scruples which Men make to the Oaths and Declarations, are grounded upon

mistakes, for that they take the words in a strained and unnatural Sence. Whereas if they would remember what the famous Bishop *Sanderson* tells us, *De Juran. Praelect. 6. sect. 12. p. 177.* And what all learned Men do agree in, to wit, *That in every Oath, all those Conditions or Exceptions ought to be understood, which by right or common use, are implied in it, viz. as far*

But for the farther satisfying of such well-meaning Persons as are scrupulous, 'twere much to be wish'd that these Oaths, Subscriptions, &c. and the other things required by the Act of Uniformity were altered, and explained by Act of Parliament according to the Bill drawn up by the Dean of St. Pauls, which the Dissenters (especially the Presbyterians) are willing to agree to, and have made the very same Proposals themselves in their Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Sermon, at the latter end. Vide.

lawful for me; things remaining in the same, state, &c. With these Conditions, there is nothing in these Oaths or Subscriptions, that can reasonably be scrupled; and without them, 'tis impossible to frame an Oath that a Man can safely venter to swear to.

Besides, though these Subscriptions were sufficient cause for Separation, how can the Lay People justify their Separation upon this account? No such Oaths or Subscriptions are required of them, they are only required from the Ministers. Why then do the People forsake the Church? Is it in reverence to the Ministers, least they should have none to Preach to? This is what they never could answer with any colour of Reason; and therefore many of the Non-Conformist Ministers do frequently in discourse fairly and honestly own, that the Terms of Lay-Communion with the Church of *England* are easy enough, but the only thing they stick at is the terms of Ministerial Communion. The only Answer that ever I heard made to this, is in a Book call'd, *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Sermon*, by some Non-Conformists, pag. 6. They tell us, That they must not justify themselves in their Preaching, and leave the People in Schism; (I must needs say, this was kindly done of them,

them, for 'twere very unfriendly in them to draw the poor silly People into Schism, and when they have done, to slip their own Necks out of the collar, and leave the People in the lurch;) and therefore they quickly find an Answer to stop their Mouths, whom they knew would never examine it: Say they, we are Ministers of Christ, and have a Commission to Preach, and therefore the People may lawfully forsake the Church to hear us, for we must not Preach to the Stone Walls. But pray will this Reason justify the People in leaving their Parish Church, and their own lawful Minister, to run after a stranger, for fear he should want a Congregation to Preach to? If the King should give a Gentleman a Commission to raise a Regiment, does this oblige Men that have formerly Listed themselves under other Officers, to leave their Service, and follow him? No, sure. There are in the Two Universities many Hundred young Men that are qualified for the Ministry, perhaps as well as most of the Non-Conformist Ministers, and are not yet called to the Office, nor provided with Churches; suppose all these now were admitted into Orders, and scatter'd all over the Kingdom, are the People obliged to run away from their lawful Minister,

Minister, orderly set over them ; and divide the Parishes each perhaps into Three or Four, to furnish all these new made Ministers with Congregations to Preach to ? An excellent contrivance this, of our Reverend Non-Conformist Ministers, to entail the Church Revenue upon them and their Successors for ever, without being beholding to King, Bishop, or Patron ; and without any possibility of ever being cut off or forfeited ; all the Lawyers in *England* could not have devised so good a security for them, as they have subtly done here for themselves. They may Preach what Doctrine they please, for the Government or against it ; they have a Commission to Preach, and the People are therefore bound, they say, to hear them. For *Preaching and Hearing*, they say, *are Relatives, and the one does necessarily suppose the other*. 'Tis true indeed, actual Preaching supposes Hearing, so do actual Governours necessarily suppose a People to be Govern'd : But a Commission to Govern, does not necessarily suppose a People actually to be Govern'd ; for there may be Governours appointed and made, though there be then no People for them to Govern ; as was resolved by all the Judges of *England*, in the Case of *Sutton's Hospital*, *Co. Rep. 10. fol. 32. a.* So their Commis-

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sion to Preach does not necessarily draw with it People to be preached to, but only warrants their Preaching where 'tis really wanted, and when they can have People to Preach to without injuring others, or disturbing the Peace of a settled true Christian Church. But to say no more in a matter so clear, I have already shew'd, that there lies no Obligation upon any Non-Conformist Minister to Preach in *England*, and consequently there can be no necessity for the People to hear them.

The Oaths and Subscriptions are required only of the Clergy, and is no more than what other Reformed Churches require of all theirs. By the Constitution of the *French* Church, every Minister that will not subscribe to the Orders among them, is to be declared a Schismatick. And by the Constitution of *Geneva*, any Minister that contemns the Authority of their Church, or by his obstinacy disturbs the Order of it, shall be first summon'd before the Magistrate, and if that will not do, he shall be Excommunicated; but no Separation allow'd. And *Calvin* says, *Ep. Olevian. pag. 311, & 122.* *Let him that will not submit to the Orders of a Society be cast out.* Our Dissenters themselves did oblige all to Swear Solemnly to
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their Covenant, under pain of Sequestration.

But, say the Dissenters, *What if the Church of England Excommunicates us; may we not then lawfully Separate and set up Meetings of our own?* I Answer, 'tis true, the Laws of the Church do say, that in some cases Men are Excommunicated *ipso facto*, yet this does not oblige any to separate from Communion, till Sentence be duly and judicially pronounced in a Church. For by the Civil Law, notwithstanding Excommunication *ipso facto*, a Declaratory Sentence of the Judge is necessary before a Man shall be deny'd the benefit of Communion. And the saying a Man is Excommunicated, *ipso facto*, signifies no more, than that the Judge may give Sentence without any new judicial Process. But though our Dissenters were actually Excommunicated for their Disobedience, this would not excuse them from Schism; as Dr. *Stillingsfleet* has proved at large, *Misch. of Separ. p. 370.*

Thus I have shew'd, that none of those Pleas which are commonly used by the Dissenters for their Separation from us, are sufficient to justify Separation from a True Church. Now if I can prove, That the Church of
England

England is a True Reform'd Church, they must either Renounce their Principles of Separation, or their Reason.

The only Argument I shall here make use of to prove, that the Church of *England* is a True Reform'd Church, is, That it is so acknowledged by all the Reform'd Churches in the World; who do all own her as a Sister; and also, by the most Eminent of our own Dissenters themselves.

All the Reform'd Churches beyond Seas do own the Church of *England* as a True Reform'd Church, and yet they know what her Faults be in her Assemblies, in her Worship, in her Ministry and Government. And this appears by the *Harmony of Confessions of the Churches*, Collected and set forth by the Churches of *France* and of the *Low-Countries*: They do receive and approve of the Confession of the Church of *England*, and call it one of the True Reform'd Churches. *Calvin* has acknowledged the same, in his writings against the *Brownists*; and condemns them for Schismatics, for separating from it: See his *Instit. lib. 4. c. 1.* And the famous *Causabon* in his Epistle to King *James I.* declares plainly, *That none at this day comes nearer the form of the Ancient Church, than the Church of England does.*

Minister, orderly set over them ; and divide the Parishes each perhaps into Three or Four, to furnish all these new made Ministers with Congregations to Preach to ? An excellent contrivance this, of our Reverend Non-Conformist Ministers, to entail the Church Revenue upon them and their Successors for ever, without being beholding to King, Bishop, or Patron ; and without any possibility of ever being cut off or forfeited ; all the Lawyers in *England* could not have devised so good a security for them, as they have subtly done here for themselves. They may Preach what Doctrine they please, for the Government or against it ; they have a Commission to Preach, and the People are therefore bound, they say, to hear them. For *Preaching and Hearing*, they say, *are Relatives, and the one does necessarily suppose the other*. 'Tis true indeed, actual Preaching supposes Hearing, so do actual Governours necessarily suppose a People to be Govern'd : But a Commission to Govern, does not necessarily suppose a People actually to be Govern'd ; for there may be Governours appointed and made, though there be then no People for them to Govern ; as was resolved by all the Judges of *England*, in the Case of *Sutton's Hospitall*, *Co. Rep. 10. fol. 32. a.* So their Commis-
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sion to Preach does not necessarily draw with it People to be preached to, but only warrants their Preaching where 'tis really wanted, and when they can have People to Preach to without injuring others, or disturbing the Peace of a settled true Christian Church. But to say no more in a matter so clear, I have already shew'd, that there lies no Obligation upon any Non-Conformist Minister to Preach in *England*, and consequently there can be no necessity for the People to hear them.

The Oaths and Subscriptions are required only of the Clergy, and is no more than what other Reformed Churches require of all theirs. By the Constitution of the *French* Church, every Minister that will not subscribe to the Orders among them, is to be declared a Schismatick. And by the Constitution of *Geneva*, any Minister that contemns the Authority of their Church, or by his obstinacy disturbs the Order of it, shall be first summon'd before the Magistrate, and if that will not do, he shall be Excommunicated; but no Separation allow'd. And *Calvin* says, *Ep. Olevian. pag. 311, & 122. Let him that will not submit to the Orders of a Society be cast out.* Our Dissenters themselves did oblige all to Swear Solemnly to
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does. *Grotius ad Boatslaer*, Ep. 62. acknowledges the same : To which I shall add the Opinion of Two of the most Eminent Reform'd Divines at this day beyond Seas.

The one is Monsieur *L' Moyn*, Professor of Divinity at *Leyden*, in his Letter to the Bishop of *London*, *Anno Dom.* 1680. who wrote to him to know his Judgment concerning our present Divisions in *England*: *L' Moyn* writes him a long Letter, which you may see at large at the latter end of *Dr. Stillingsfleet's Mischief of Separation*: I shall only repeat some of it: *Where was it ever seen* (says he, after he had been highly condemning our Dissenters for Separation) *that the Salvation of Men was concern'd for Articles of Discipline, and things which regard but the out-side, and Order of the Church. Truly these are never accounted in the number of essential Truths: And as there is nothing but these that can save, so there is nothing but these that can exclude from Salvation. For the Episcopal Government, what is there in it that is dangerous, and may reasonably alarm Men's Consciences? And if this be capable of depriving Men of Eternal Glory, and shutting the Gates of Heaven, who was there that entred there for the space of 1500. Years, since that, for all that time, all the Churches of the World had no* other

other kind of Government? If it were contrary to the Truth, is it credible that God had so highly approved it and permitted his Church to be tyrannized over by it for so many Hundred Tears, &c. Therefore since all the Reformed Churches do look upon the Church of England, not only as a Sister, but as an elder Sister, how comes it to pass, that some English-men themselves have so ill an Opinion of her at present, as to separate rashly from her? For to speak the Truth, I do not see their separate Meetings are of any great use, or that one may be more Comforted there, than in the Episcopal Churches. When I was at London, almost Five Tears ago, I went to several of their Meetings, to see what way they took for the Instruction of their Hearers; but, I profess, I was not at all Edified by it. I heard one of the most famous Non-Conformists, he Preached in a place where there were about Four-score Women, and a few Men: He had chosen a Text about the Building up the Ruines of Jerusalem; and for Explication of it, he cited Pliny and Vitruvius, I believe an Hundred times: And did not forget to mention a Proverb in Italian, Duro con duro non fa muro, All this seem'd to me nothing to the purpose, and very improper for his Auditory. To Canonize themselves, and make a Schism, to
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have the liberty to vent such Vanities seems very ill Conduct: And the People seem very weak to quit their mutual Assemblies for things that so little deserve their esteem and preference: I do not think that any one is obliged to suffer such Irregularity, &c.

The other Authority I promised to cite, is Monsieur *Claud*, to whom the Bishop of London wrote about the same time, desiring his Opinion as aforesaid. Monsieur *Claud* returns him this answer, *All Reform'd Churches do acknowledge the Church of England, as a true Church; and I shall not be afraid to give that name to the holding of Assemblies apart, and separating from the publick Assemblies, and withdrawing themselves from under the Government of the Church: 'Tis real Schism. We do not enter into a comparison of your order with that under which we live, all are subject to inconveniencies, ours have hers, as well as yours: It is enough for us to know, that the same Divine Providence, which by an indispensable necessity, and by conjuncture of Affairs, did at the beginning of the Reformation, put our Churches under that of the Presbytery, has put yours under that of the Episcopacy; and as we are assured, that you do not despise our simplicity, so neither ought we to oppose our selves against*
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your Preheminence. See both these Letters, and a third from Monsieur L' Angle, to the same purpose, at large in the latter end of Dr. Stillingsfleet's *Misch. of Separ.*

Thus much for the foreign Divines. Now we will come nearer home, and see what our Dissenters themselves have thought of the Church of *England*, from which they separate.

First then, Several of the Dissenters, to avoid the imputation of *Brownism*, do sincerely profess, before God and all the World, That *they hold the Church of England, to be a true Church of Christ, with which they did, and would hold Communion, notwithstanding any defilement or unwarranted Power of Church Government exercised therein.* See the *Apologetical Narrative*, p. 5, 6. Again, They own that our Parochial Churches are true Churches, and that they can find no fault with the Doctrine of our Church, and that 'tis lawful and

* sometimes a Duty to communicate with us.

* If occasional Communion be lawful, constant is a Duty. See Papers for Accommod. p. 47, 51, 56.

Baxter's Defence of his Cure, p. 38. and 64. *Corbet of Schism.* p. 41. *Peace-offering in the name of the Congreg. party Anno Dom. 1667. p. 10. True way of Conc. part 3. c. 1. sect. 40.* and Mr. Baxter

in his last Answer to *Bagshaw*, p. 30, 31. has these words, *You little know what pernicious design the Devil has upon you, in perswading you to desire and indeavour to pull down the interest of Christ and Religion, which is upheld in the Parish Churches of this Land, and to think that 'tis best to bring them as low in reality and reputation as you can, and contract the Religious Interest all into private Meetings.* And see also *Mr. Baxter's Plea for Peace*, p. 240. to the same purpose.

And lastly, *Dr. Owen* in his *Book of Evangelical Love*, p. 54. acknowledges, *That they look upon the Church of England, measuring it by the Doctrine received since the Reformation, to be as sound and healthful a part of the Catholick Church, as any in the World.*

I have now prov'd that Separation from a true Church is sinful, and schismatical; I have proved the Church of *England* to be a true Church; and all this I have proved from their own Writings. How will they now justify their Separation, or clear themselves from the imputation of Schism? What will they say to this? Is Schism not a sin? Or is their Separation from us not Schism? If they say it is not Schism: Why, then our Non-conformist Ministers know better
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what is Schism, than all the Learned Divines of the Church of *England*, and the most Eminent Men of all the Reformed Churches beyond Seas do. For I have shewed from their own words, That they do acknowledge the Church of *England* to be as true and sound a part of the Reform'd Church, as any in the whole World, and condemn all those that separate from her as guilty of Schism. Doubtless these Men are as competent judges of Matters of Religion as any of our Dissenting Ministers. And I am sure we have not the least reason to believe they would flatter us, for they are strangers who have no dependance upon us; and Men of more Piety and Honesty, than to indulge us in any thing that is sinful. But it may be they will say, that all these Learned Divines beyond Seas, who have acknowledged the Church of *England* to be a true Church, are ignorant of the Errors and Corruptions in her: But let me tell them, They might have a little more civility, than to suppose that so many godly upright Men, would rashly give their judgment of Matters of so great moment as those are which relate to Religion, before they were truly acquainted with the nature and circumstances of the thing: And besides, They

ought not to judge of other Men by themselves: Because the most of their own Divines are utter strangers to the practice and Constitution of other Churches, as appears sufficiently by their Principles of Separation, must they believe others to be so too? No thoroughly accomplish'd Divine can be supposed to be ignorant of the true state and condition of any Reformed National Church, much less of so great and considerable an one as the Church of *England*. But to put this out of dispute, it appears before that several of the most Eminent Men before-mentioned, were in *England* for some years, and frequented both the Churches and Meetings, on purpose to acquaint themselves with both, in order to giving their judgment of them.

Since therefore the Doctrine of the Church of *England* is sound, and the Worship true, and Government and Constitution of it as agreeable to that of the best and purest Ages of the Church, as any now in the World; let us in the name of God, lay aside all those fears and jealousies that have possess'd the minds of too many of us, concerning it, and let us remember that not only the Peace and Prosperity of this Church and Nation, and of every particular Mem-

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ber of it, depends upon our Union, but of the Protestant Religion all over the World. Tho' there may be some things amiss in the Church of *England*, it is not the business of private Men to Reform the Church, or dispute the fitness or unfitness of every little imposition. Their Duty is to Conform, at least in the outward action, and submit the fitness of such things, to the Wisdom of those to whom God Almighty has intrusted the Government of the Church and Nation, they may reasonably be thought more competent judges of what is convenient and fit to be done, or not to be done, than private Men can be. And if any thing be amiss in the Government of the Church, or the manner of God's Worship, they are to answer for it, not the People. God will call them to an account for imposing upon his People things not agreeable to his Will: But will never condemn us for doing our Duty in submitting to such Governors as he has placed over us. 'Tis true, there are some things in Religion which are essential to it, without which, Men cannot be saved. Now in case our Governours command us to act contrary to these, we ought not to obey, *for we must obey God rather than Men*: But 'tis agreed

on all sides, That the Church of *England* enjoins no such things, and that they who live godly, sober lives according to the Doctrine of this Church, are in a safe and ready way to Heaven.

But 'tis a difficult Matter for Men to forsake what they have been all their lives accustomed to; they cannot believe that Separation is so great a sin as we seem to make it: And that so many honest good People and godly Ministers did live and die in sin. If they are resolv'd, they will not believe Separation from a true Church to be sinful, who can help that? The great number that have liv'd and dy'd in that Opinion, does not make the thing less sinful. The *Donatists* in the *African Church*, were more numerous than our *English* Dissenters are, and had 'tis likely, as many sober and learned Divines among 'em. For at the Conference at *Carthage*, they had 400 Bishops, yet these were condemn'd for Schismatics by St. *Austin* and all the Catholick Bishops. And the things that these *Donatists* separated from the Church for, were for the most part the very same, that our present Dissenters make the cause of their separation from the Church of *England*. They thought the Bishopricks too large, and the Power of the Bishops too great.

great. They refus'd to join in Communion with the Catholicks, because sinners were admitted there. They forsook the Ministers, because they were not so agreeable to their humour as they would have them.

* They would not suf-

fer any to speak in the

Churches but the Mini-

sters, and stop't the mouths of all the People.

They held that the Civil Magistrate had no

Power to Reform the Church. They made

a shew of greater Zeal for the Purity of

Religion, than other People; and by their

stiff, rigorous severity which they shew'd,

and the vehement out-crys which they made,

that Discipline was not duly executed;

Many of the People, not well grounded in

the truth, were terrified, and turned unto

them, believing them to be the most zealous

holy Men, and the only true Church

in the World. Finally they condemn'd all

other Churches as not true Churches. See

all this in *Gifford* (a Non-conformist Mi-

nister) his Book against the *Brownists* 2. part.

These are the very pretences that our pre-

sent Dissenters make for their separating

from this Church. Our Bishopricks are too

large; our Churches not according to Christ's

Institution; our Ministers unable, and un-

* *Optatus Malevianus*,
lib. 2. p. 47.

godly; our way of Worship false; our Magistrates assume an unwarranted Power in Church Matters. Yea, and in their over pretending to Purity and Godliness, they are exact *Donatists*, and by that very means do draw the more ignorant and zealous sort of People to them, as the *Brownists* did. No People pretend so much to Purity and Religion, as they do: In all places where they have their publick Meetings, they are sure to begin before the Parish Churches, and end after, be they as long as they will: But yet go in to one of their Meetings, and you shall see as little signs of Devotion and as many of the People asleep, as in any Parish Church in the Kingdom for the number. So in their common Discourse, many of them will scarce allow themselves so much liberty as to make them good company, for fear they should happen to tell a lye; but yet in their Dealings, they will over-reach a Customer in a Bargain, and use as many equivocations to deceive him as any other People shall. But least you think I do them wrong, let us hear what the learned Mr. *Baxter* says of them, (you won't believe that he would wrong them.) In his *Poor Man's Family Book*, p. 221. speaking of such who run into Parties by Divisions, says
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he, *Those injudicious sort of Christians having an over high esteem of their own Understandings and Godliness, and desiring to be made conspicuous for their Godliness, in the World, separate from ordinary Christians as below them, and unworthy of their Communion; these Sects have ever been the Nests of Errors.* And again, *ib. p. 331.* he bids us beware of joining our selves to Separate Meetings, who pretend to stricter Discipline, and greater Purity, who set themselves up Factionously and Contentiously against the Concor-dant Churches, on pretence of greater Purity, whose Meetings are employed in Reviling others, and Condemning other Churches, and puffing themselves up with Pride, as if they were the only Churches of Christ.

But our Dissenters will say, This is a scandalous abuse to say, that they condemn all other Reformed Churches in the World. But I doubt they agree with the *Donatists* even in this. For I suppose they will condemn all those that account them Schismaticks. And this do all the Reformed Churches; for they all hold, that Separation from a true Church is Schism, and own the Church of *England* for a true Church, and consequently make them Schismaticks, and so have expressly declared them as appears before.

fore. Again, I suppose they will condemn all Churches that communicate with an Idolatrous Anti-Christian Church, knowing her faults ; some of them declare the Church of *England* to be such a Church, and then they must condemn all the Reformed Churches which communicate with her.

Well, say the Dissenters, *You of the Church of England have a great deal to say for your selves, and if all be true that you have told us, our Separation from you is sinful and unreasonable : But what reason have we to believe you ; we have a great many able and godly Ministers of our own, who tell us the quite contrary ; 'tis certain they can't both be in the right, why may we not then believe your Ministers may be deceived as well as ours ?*

I answer, 'Tis not so likely that all the Divines of the Church of *England* that have been since the Reformation, should be deceived in a thing of this nature, as that those of the Non-conformists should ; First, Because they are much more numerous, and 'tis not so likely that a great many good Men should be deceived, as a few ; 'Tis a Rule in Logick, *Quod plures & sapientiores testantur credibile est esse verum.* And Secondly, Be-
cause

cause they have much better means to come to the knowledge of the Truth, than those of the Non-conformists can pretend to ; as will plainly appear by considering the Method taken on both sides for the breeding up of Divines. Those who are design'd for the Study of Divinity in the Church of *England*, are kept at the best Schools that can conveniently be had, till they understand Latin and Greek very well, then they are admitted into one of the Universities, where they are put under the Care of a particular Tutor, who is always one of the Fellows of the College, and consequently, a Man well approved of by the whole College for his Learning and Sobriety ; for by the Statutes of every College, none but such are qualified for Fellowships. This Tutor has seldom above 20. Students under his Care at a time, and many of them not half that number ; every Student comes twice a day to his Tutor's Chamber, to be instructed by him. And besides this, the College appoints other Tutors, or publick Lecturers, who are to teach and instruct them in the publick Halls, some for Philosophy, some for Disputations, and other Exercises. These publick Tutors are changed every year, which is a great Advantage to the Students, by acquainting

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quainting them with the several Methods and Opinions of such variety of Learned Men. Thus they spend the first four Years, and then after very strict Examination by all the Fellows of the College, to which they belong, in the publick Hall for six days together ; if they be found qualified, they commence *Bachelors of Arts*, if not, they are laid aside till the next Year. After they have taken their *Bachelors* Degree, they begin to apply themselves more particularly to the Study of Divinity, but are still obliged to publick Lectures for Hebrew, Greek, and other parts of Learning necessary for that Study ; and to publick Disputations. And thus they spend three Years more, and then after a strict and publick Examination as before, if they be found qualified, they commence *Masters of Arts*, or *Doctors of Philosophy*. And here observe, That no Man can hope to take his Degrees in any of the Universities, unless he be thoroughly qualified for it : No such thing as Favour in the case, because the Examinations are publick before all the Fellows and the President of the College : And besides that, every Man that is to take any Degree in any of the Colleges, is obliged by the Laws of the College, to ask the
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Consent of every Man, particularly, who has ever taken the Degree of *Master of Arts* in that College, if they be at that time any where in or about the Town, and any one of these if he can shew Reason for it, as that he is a Man of a scandalous Life and Conversation, or of not sufficient Learning or such like, may stop him of his Degree. After they have taken their *Master of Arts* Degree, then is the time they usually enter into Holy Orders. Some few there are, who are admitted into *Deacons* Orders, after they have commenced *Bachelors of Arts*, but these are few, and are look'd upon but as young raw Fellows; so that generally those who are admitted to the Office of the Ministry in the Church of *England*, are Men who have spent at least seven Years in the Study of University Learning, in one of the two most Famous Universities in the World, with all the Helps and Advantages that are necessary for the perfecting of them in their Studies: For besides those aforesaid, they have the constant Conversation of so many Learned, Ingenious Men; the use of Great and Noble Libraries, Famous all over the World, (besides the particular Libraries belonging to each College: In which are to be found many

many Pieces of Antiquity and Ancient Manuscripts, &c. not to be met with any where else, and which give great Light into Antiquity. And in each University they have Divinity Professors, who are chosen out of the most Eminent Divines they have, whose business it is to hear Divinity Lectures read, and Points of Divinity disputed on in the public Divinity-Schools, to which all those who design for that Study, are after some few Years obliged to attend. Neither do these Learned Men trust only to their own Knowledge, but they have carefully settled a Correspondence with all the most Eminent Men beyond Seas.

These and many more are the Advantages of Education which the Divines of the Church of *England* have above those of the Non-conformists, who are generally bred after this manner: A Non-conformist Minister perhaps, or some such Person who lives obscurely in some remote part of the Country, gets 30 or 40 Boys together, and there he teaches them common School-Learning, till they come to be towards 20 years of age, and then instead of entring them into the University, he enters 'em in another Chamber, perhaps 5 or 6 at a time, and there he teaches them University Learning,

as they call it; for 2 or 3 years it may be without the help of any Libraries, but the good Man's Closet, or any Conversation more than with one another, and with the Master, if he will honour them so far, and his assistant if he chance to have one. And so after 2 or 3 years Study at this rate, they are qualified for the Office of a Minister among them, and are thought fit to be intrusted with the Care of Souls, and Government of a Church. I own there are some few among them, who have had better Education than this is; but these are the general Methods taken for breeding up of Divines on both sides, which is so well known, that none will have the Confidence to deny it. And now let any Man of reason judge, whether in Matters that depend so much upon Antiquity, and the Practice and Judgment of the Primitive Church, as the Controversies between us and the Dissenters do; whether I say are more likely to be mistaken, all the Divines of the Church of England, or those of the Dissenters? *It is not so likely, says Mr. Baxter in his Poor Man's Family Book, p. 222. that God should reveal his Mind to a few good Men, and those of the rarer, injudicious sort, and such as are most infected with proud overvaluing their own Wisdom*

Wisdom and Godliness; and such as have had least Time and Study, and means to come to great Understanding, and such who shew themselves the proudest Censurers of others, and least tender of the Church's Peace, and such as are apt to break all to pieces among themselves; I say, 'Tis not so likely that these are in the right, as the main Body of agreeing, humble, godly, peaceable, studious Ministers, who have had longer time, and better means to know the Truth: And the Body of Christians, even the Church, hath more promises from Christ, than particular dividing Persons have. See all this, and more to the same purpose in this Book aforesaid, writ by Mr. Baxter himself.

So that had we no other Authority on our side, than that of the Church of *England*, 'twere much safer to rely upon their judgments in this Matter, than on the judgment of the Non-conformists; but it appears before that we have the Opinion of all the Reformed Churches in the World on our side; and if that won't turn the Scales, God Almighty must work a Miracle for their Conversion, as he did for *St. Paul's*.

'Tis so evident that the Ministers of the Church of *England* have much the Advantage of those among the Dissenters, as to Learning and Knowledge, that they have no way left

to obviate this, but by down right disclaiming at the University Learning, and calling them *Sophistical Divines*, who are bred up in vain and curious Arts.

* See *Brown* in his *Preface* to his Book. And *Mr. Baxter* in his *Defence of his Cure*, p. 124. tells us of a Church in *New England*, that separated from a Church on the account of their Preachers having human Learning.

* His Book of the life and manners of Christians, note all the Brownists say the same. So did the Donatists in St. Augustine's time, condemn human Learning, but St. Augustine condemns their folly herein, in his 1st. Book against Cresconius, ch. 14.

But perhaps some of our Dissenters will own that our Divines of the Church of *England* are generally more learned than those among them; (one of the most competent judges among them, *Mr. Baxter*, has own'd it fairly in his Answer to a certain Letter, p. 18. where he says, he has seldom heard any but very good and well studied Sermons in our Churches, and on the other side, complains publickly of the weakness and injudiciousness, and self-conceitedness of too many of the Non-conformist Preachers, in his *Sacral. Desert.* p. 86.) yet they will tell us, they deceive the People, and keep them all in ignorance for their own Interests, lest they should lose their Church Preferments.

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This is a very severe Censure, to say, that so many Thousand godly Ministers as have been of the Church of *England* since the Reformation, and who have many of them died Martyrs for the sake of it, should be such Villains as to deceive the People, and damn their own Souls, for the sake of their Church Preferences.

But how can self-interest oblige the Clergy to defend the Church of *England* as now establish'd, if they thought it not agreeable to the Word of God? It must be either Pride or Covetousness that must move them to it. If it were Pride, doubtless the Presbyterian or Independant way would answer that end much better; for whereas now the Parsons, Vicars and Curates of all the Parishes in *England* are subject to their respective Bishops, &c. and can do nothing as to matters of Discipline or Government, &c. not even in their own Parishes, without the consent of the Diocesan Bishop: Were the Constitution of the Church changed to that of the Presbyterian or Independant way, every Pastor would become an absolute Bishop, and accountable to none for what he did. If it were Covetousness that moved them to it, I suppose that were all the Parsons of every Parish in *England* made the Pastor of that Church or Parish according to the

the Presbyterian or Independant Notion of a Pastor, and all the Dioceſan and Metropolitan Biſhopricks, and their Deans and Chapters diſſolved, and their Revenue ſuper-added to the preſent in-come of every Pariſh Miniſter or Paſtor, their Church Livings would be no leſs, but more valuable than now they are. Why do they not then ſet about this change of Church Government as faſt as they can, if they think in their Conſciences 'twere more agreeable to God's will ſo to do? 'tis plain, 'twould better answer their Covetouſneſs and Ambition, to pull down Epiſcopacy, than to live in this poor ſubjection that now they do. Here they will tell us, the reaſon is plain, becauſe the Biſhops, who are the Governours of the Church will not let them; they know the ſweet of a fat Biſhoprick too well to part with it, I warrant them. But the Thouſandth part of the Clergy of *England* are not Biſhops, nor perhaps never think to be ſo. Every one of theſe have a Vote in the Convocation, and doubtleſs may carry it againſt ſo ſmall a number of Biſhops as 27. were they not perſwaded in their Conſciences, that the Church of *England* as now eſtabliſh'd, is as agreeable to the Will of God, as any other whatſoever.

Therefore ſince the Divines of the Church of *England* are more Numerous, and generally

more Learned, and can have no design upon the account of Self-interest, to deceive the People, 'tis safer sure in a doubtful case, to take their words, and trust to their judgments, than to those among the Dissenters, whose Interest it is to deceive the People, and make the breach between us as wide as they can, many of them being Men of no Fortune, and such as have no other way to get a Living, and Men who must needs be losers by an Union between us, be the Conformity of which side it will, whether they Conform to us, or we to them, for be the Government of the Church of *England*, either Episcopal or Presbyterian, or Independant; 'tis but reasonable that the Ministers who are lawfully put into the Cures, should continue therein still, as Pastors of their own Churches; so that the greatest part of the Non-conformist Preachers must be laid aside; for 'twere not reasonable that others who are as deserving as they, and lawfully settled in their Cures, should be turn'd out to make room for them, nor that Parishes should be divided all over the Kingdom, to furnish them with Churches. 'Tis likely that some of the Non-conformist Ministers who are better qualified than ordinary, might be provided for, should it please God, that there were an Union between us: But many of them I doubt,

doubt, could not; so that 'tis evident their Interest obliges the most of them to deceive the People, and keep open the breach as wide as they can. And that they really do so, is plain, by their making the Differences between us seem greater than really they are, and than they themselves have own'd them to be in their Writings, as I have all along shew'd: And also by their pretending to quote Authority for what they say, and either not mentioning the Chapter or Page where the Words are to be found, or else altering the very Words and Sence of the Author to serve their turn: If any one think I do them wrong, let them look into Dr. *Maurice* his *Defence of Diocesan Episc.* p. 237. 335. 353. 377. 396. 442. 444. how Mr. *Clarkson* to prove Episcopacy in the Primitive Church to be agreeable to the congregational or Independant way, has misrepresented the very Words and Sence of his Authors. You may find more Instances of this kind in the *Preface to Dr. Comber's Defence of Liturgies*, 1st. part. And see how falsely Mr. *Baxter* has translated *Theodoret's* Epistle to serve his *Hypothesis*. Dr. *Stillingfleet* his *Mischiefs of Separation*, p. 261. And how he has misrepresented the Doctor's own words, *ib.* 131. 132 and 126. Many more Instances of this kind may be given, were it

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it necessary, but what has been said is sufficient to show that in Matters of Religion, where the case seems doubtful, and all the Divines of the Church of *England* agree on one side, and the Non-conformists only on the other; 'tis much safer to take the Opinion of those of the Church of *England*, than of the others, because they are more numerous, and generally more learned, and seem to have less reason to deceive us.

To all that has been said, I shall only add this, That I have taken all the pains that possibly I could, to inform my self truly of the Matters in Controversy between the Church of *England*, and the Dissenters; and did really believe the things Scrupled to be of much greater moment than I now find them to be. And tho' I for my own part, am satisfied in my Conscience, that there is nothing at all injoin'd by the Church of *England*, but what is agreeable to God's Word, and the Opinion of the wisest Men of the Church in all Ages, and what the most tender Consciences may satisfy themselves in, if they would but make use of the proper means; yet I could heartily wish that many things were laid aside, if that would purchase an Union between us. If things which are allow'd to be in themselves indifferent, as Postures, and Ceremonies, and such

such like, were neither impos'd nor abolish'd, but left to the Discretion of every Christian to use or not to use as he thinks best, and as the Ceremony of Bowing towards the Altar is, and some other alterations made, such as you may see in the Proposals offer'd to the Parliament for the Uniting of Protestant Dissenters by Dr. S. Dean of *St. Pauls*, there could then be no reasonable Pretence left for Separation. But if nothing else must purchase our Peace, but the overthrowing the whole Constitution of this Church, 'tis too dear a purchase, till we have found another to exchange for, more agreeable to God's Word, and more consistent with the Peace and Tranquility of this Nation; but that we have not found yet, I am sure, as is sufficiently evident, by a plain experimental Proof, which these Nations lately had; 'tis very well known, that in the late unhappy times, when the Church of *England* Liturgy, &c. was taken away, the Presbyterians, Independants, and other Parties, pray'd one against the other, and against establishing that way of Government, which others of them pray'd for; divers Persons made their own Passions, singular Opinions, and Errors great part of their Prayers; others rejected all Confessions of sins, as no part of their Devotions; in many places

places of *England*, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was laid aside for 12 or 15 Years together, so was Infant Baptism; some would Pray for the King one way, some another, others not at all. And in that time that the Church of *England* way of Worship was laid aside, there were more Errors, Sects, Heresies, and Blasphemies broach'd and vented, than ever before or since: This is acknowledged by the Dissenters themselves, see a Book call'd *Gangrena*, part 1st. p. 175. writ about the Year, 1646. where many of them do acknowledge, That we (say they) *in these four last Years* (for so long had Presbytery been uppermost) *have overpassed the Deeds of the Prelates, in whose time never so great nor so many Errors were heard of, much less such Blasphemies, and Confusions, we have worse things among us, more corrupt Doctrines, and Practices, than in 80. Years before, &c.* So that if nothing must purchase Peace between us, but the parting with our Religion, and overthrowing our whole Constitution, to set up another, which Experience has taught us, is neither so consistent with God's Glory, nor the Peace of these Nations, they must excuse us. Besides, let me tell them, Their late Carriage in *Scotland*, has given us great reason to fear that the Religion they so much boast of, and with so much Zeal, endeavour to set up in this Nation, in the place of that which by God's good Providence is now Establish'd, is not the true Religion of Christ; for that never taught any to Affront and Revile his lawful Ministers, and to burn the Holy Scriptures, as they have done now more than once. *I pray God open their Eyes, and soften their Hearts, and give them Grace to Repent.*

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